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rian Orthodox Church of Antioch
n the United States and Canada

CATECHISM
for
SUNDAY SCHOOL

Part One

1985

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COME FOLLOW, ME

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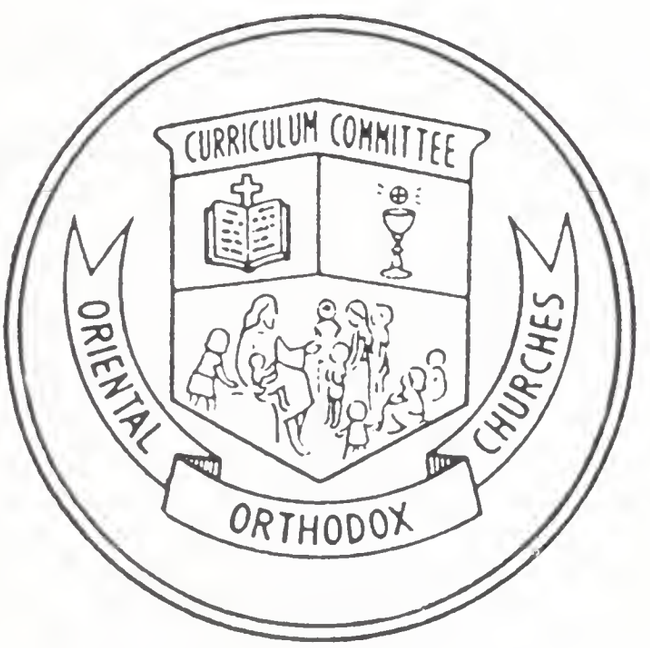

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CURRICULUM & LEADERSHIP

TRAINING PROJECT

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SYRIAN ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE, U.S.A. & CANADA

Athanasius Y. Samuel

Athanasius Y. Samuel,
Archbishop

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UNIT 1 COME, FOLLOW ME

Lesson 1 God Loves Us

Have you ever noticed the amazing beauty of nature? How beautiful the mountains, the rivers, the blue sky, the green valleys and the sun-set are!! Do you know that all these were created by God, for each and everyone of us? God loved man so much that He arranged all the rest of creation for the blessing of man and glory of God. But it is a pity that man could neither understand nor respond to this love. More than this, man disobeyed His commandments and went astray.

Even though man was not thankful to God, God was still kind towards man. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Our Lord Jesus Christ declared to us that God is Love and He manifested this Love in the selfgiving on the cross. It is the nature of a lover to give, sacrifice and love.

Whom does God love?

He loves all, for it is written that He makes His sun rise on good and bad alike. He has created every man in His own

image and does not distinguish between one man and another on account of colour, language, culture or rank. For God's love is Fatherly and the Father loves all His children.

Yet His love for His own is of a special kind..... what can it be? His own (people) are those who believe in Christ as Saviour, King and True God. They are those who obey the commandments of our Lord Jesus. Through their being united (incorporated) with the Son, they have the grace of sonship (adoption) and all promises. They are heirs with Jesus, kings with Jesus, and priests with Jesus. This great position which the faithful reach is the result of the life of communion with the Son. Following are some verses for meditation upon our Lord Jesus' love for the faithful.

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

In another place, He says, "The glory which You have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one" (John 17:22).

And then He says, "I made known to them Your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which You have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

The Degree of Lord's Love for us.

We cannot fathom this Love which surpases understanding, nor could the saints comprehend the width, length, depth or height, of this overflowing love. But the Lord Jesus has revealed it to us and the Holy Bible has taught us about it.

It is eternal love before the foundation of the world.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:3-4).

It is an abundant, and sacrificing love.

What love is greater than the Father's giving His Son as a ransom for the salvation of the world?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

St. John, the apostle, reveals how sacrificial was God's love when He sent His Son to be our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

You can find consolation in the sacrificial, abundant love, when you survey and contemplate the life of Lord Jesus.

He was born of a woman within the pale of the law to take away the curse of the law.

He came as a poor man to enrich us.

He was himself tempted, but He came out victorious so that we may share His victory.

He ministered in Galilee, Nazareth and Judea healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers and casting out demons.

He gave us His flesh and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life.

He endured the suffering, on the cross, and bore the burden of our disgrace, so that we may receive His righteousness.

He died and rose again so that He might destroy the power of death.

He rose from the dead that we rise with Him unto a new life, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

He ascended up to heaven to prepare a place for us.

And He will come again in His glory to take us to Himself that we may dwell with Him in His everlasting Kingdom.

Features of God's Love.

The life of Christ and the Holy Scriptures give us the following qualities of God's Love.

1. It is a seeking love, "...not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).
— Meditate on the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (St. Luke 15:1—10).

2. It is sacrificing love, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).
— Contemplate the cross as a picture of love's greatest sacrifice.

3. It is forgiving love, "Come now, let us reason together", says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet; they shall be as white as snow: though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Is. 1:18).
— Meditate on the parable of the Prodigal son (St. Luke 15) and on the Lord's meeting with the sinful woman (St. Luke 7:36-50).

4. It is unselfish and un-motivated love. "Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend" (John 15:13).

5. It is fearless love, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

The Implication of this love.

There are two types of "Love"; one is a love which expects something in return, and the other is the love in which the lover gives himself for the beloved. This second type of love is the love of God and it is called in Greek "agape." Even though God has no self-centred motive behind His Love, yet His love helps us to *love God as He loved us.* Also this love of God teaches us the manner in which we should love one another. When we love one another in the manner God loves us, we partake more and more of His nature. The apostle says "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him," and he further says "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Questions.

What is the relationship between the meaning of Trinity and the nature of God's love?

How far does God love us?

What are the features of God's love? What distinguishes it from any other kind of love?

Problem: If a friend of yours asks you, "Why do you deny yourselves the desires of the body and earthly pleasures? Why are you so particular about the sanctity of the body and self-sacrifice? Is it a kind of self-torture?"..... How would you answer him?

Texts for Memorization

The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:17).

Suggested Activities.

Distribute some Gospel portions or other booklets dealing with God's love for mankind.

Be strict with yourself: Are all my actions in conformity with the love of Jesus?

Try to draw a beautiful picture to show Christ's love such as the crucifixion or any other suitable scene and hang it on the wall. Pray that God may use the picture as He uses the word.

Be eager to do with your brethren acts of love to people in need, and check whether this springs from the love of Jesus for him and you.

Expand the Skeleton Story.

A rich Christian . . . . no help to the poor . . . . . mind in unrest . . . saw a painting . . . . . Jesus Christ crucified . . . . . with the inscription "this I have done for you" . . . . . what have you done for me?" . . . The question went to his heart . . . . . He became changed as a powerful missionary.

Lesson 2 Beloved Let Us Love One Another

We have seen that the essence of God is love and He demands the same type of love from us also. God's love was manifested at its best on the cross in the giving off His life for us. His most important commandment to us is that we should love one another as He loved us: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

The loving Jesus, inspires us to love others

The love of the Redeemer, which revealed itself in His giving Himself for us, is the fire which inflames everything round it. It is bound to enkindle in us the fire of love. The Lord said to this effect: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled" (Luke 12:49). Love calls forth love. It releases the potentials of love in man. The surpassing love which the Lord showed towards us pulls us out of our self-love and fills us with outflowing love in my love for Jesus personally and for others in His name.

He who loves God, loves his brother

St. John wrote in his epistle, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has

not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (I John 4:20-21).

The quality of love for others

1. Love poured out by the Holy Spirit.

Real Christian love means the presence of the Lord Jesus in the heart of the faithful. If Jesus is not the source of this love and the Holy Spirit is not its spring, it is merely human and earthly love which is not accepted before the Heavenly Lord.

Without the love of Jesus man cannot come near God, for God is love. It is the indication of the new life, and that we have passed from the darkness to the new life of righteousness. If one has the love of Jesus in his heart he could love his friends and enemies as well.

2. It is sacrificial.

John the apostle, "By this we know love, that he laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Jesus was not content with merely giving things that belonged to Him. He gave Himself to the people and His sacrifice reached its culmination on the cross. We are not only required to give part of our time or money to others. We are asked to give ourselves to others bearing the frailties of the weak.

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbour for his good to edify him. For Christ did not please

himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell on me."

Giving is not a matter of talk; it is action and real labour: "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

Following are some of the aspects of this sacrificial love.

It is patient and kind, i. e., identifying with the poor and down-trodden, "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful" (1 Cor. 13:4).

It does not envy, i. e., approving and encouraging the talents of others.

It is not boastful or conceited, i. e., love which is modest and not looking down on others.

It is neither rude nor selfish, "It is not arrogant or rude" (1 Cor. 13:5).

It does not rejoice at the weaknesses of others, but rejoices in the right. It is always on the side of truth. "It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right" (1 Cor. 13:6).

"It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).

Such love never ends (1 Cor. 13:8).

Christianity thus emphasizes the importance of practical attitudes in life.

St. John the apostle says, "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him" (1 John 3:17-18)?

3. It is showing concern to "the least"

We can see Jesus on the cross tortured for our sins. His head bearing the crown of thorns, his body pierced. His dignity trodden down and His soul sorrowful even to death, reflected the suffering of all those who suffer on earth. The Lord identified Himself with the afflicted. Our Lord Jesus Christ identified Himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the strangers, the sick and the prisoners. (Matt. 25:35-36:Mark 2:4). And He said, "Truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me (Matt. 25:40).

"The least" (those of inferior rank) are the miserable, the weak and the poor. That is why one of the Fathers said, "If you want today to touch Christ's wounds as Thomas did, all you have to do is to show mercy towards a miserable man."

It is told that when the saint Abba John, Pope of Alexandria, called the Merciful, took charge of the Patriarchate, he asked his assistants to draw up a list of the names of his masters. When they asked him, in surprise, who these masters might be, he replied that they are the poor of Alexandria. This is the genuine Christian attitude that does not look down upon the poor, but in humility serves and gives abundantly to them.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us that our neighbours are not only our kinsmen, nor are they those with whom there are ties of affection or interest. My neighbour is the one who needs my love. In this way, I become everybody's neighbour

and everyone becomes my neighbour even though there were no human ties between us. This is amply illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37).

Questions

Read Luke 12:49 and 1 Cor. 8:11 and show how the Redeemer's love inspires our love for others.

Refer to John 15:12 and show the quality of our love for people and how it must be like the quality of God's love for us.

Is what people call 'love' real love? Why?

Refer to 1 John 3:18 and Luke 10: 34-35; and show whether Christian love can be a mere emotion.

Who is my neighbour? (Refer to Luke 10: 25-35). What do we mean by saying that Christian love is without limits?

What is meant by "Jesus identified himself with the afflicted"? (Read Matt. 25:40).

Refer to 1 Cor. 13 and show the aspects of real Christian love. Read the chapter substituting the word 'Christ' for 'love'. Again read the chapter substituting the word 'I' for 'Christ'.

Activities

Discuss with your friends the ways in which you can express Christian love in your own life situations from committees for

visits, *attending to the needy, and acts of charity.*

Remember what John Chrysostom said, "Your dog is surfeited while Christ starves." You respect the altar when the Body of Christ is brought down on it. Yet you are careless and indifferent when those who are the body of Christ (i. e. the poor) perish.

Texts for Memorization

1 John 4:18, 19

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us."

Lesson 3 The New Man (1)

A conversation:

The Bible tells us of a conversation, taking place during the night, between our Lord Jesus and a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus. Jesus said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit... Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born anew... The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (St. Jn Ch. 3).

Two births for every faithful:

This conversation means that every faithful is born twice: a physical birth of the father and mother, and a spiritual birth of Christ and the Church. In the mother's womb, a person is born of the flesh, while in the womb of the Church the baptismal font, the faithful is born of the spirit. By baptism, we take the image of Christ to become the new man. The new man is born within, according to the image of God in righteousness and the holiness of truth.

Apparently, what the priest does, is that he pours water and prays that the Holy Spirit might be in it; He immerses the faithful thrice, so that the Holy Spirit transforms baptism into a medium through which we obtain the power of the Lord's death and resurrection. By baptism, the old man is buried and the new man is born.

John, the golden-mouthed says, "as when the power of fire is focussed on the bars of impure gold mixed with the dust of the earth, it changes them into pure gold, the same, or even more, happens when the Holy Spirit acts in baptism with those whom He washes. He, then, changes them from mud into what is purer than gold. When the Holy Spirit fills our souls like fire, He, first burns the image of the earthly, to give the image of the heavenly. As to how the new man is created of water by the Spirit, that happens by the same power and secret by which man was first born of the earth. As the earth has been hardened and strengthened by God's will and has become complete organs and systems of the body, this, and even more, is done by the Holy Spirit to the water, making wonderful matters beyond reasoning."

In another context, the same saint speaks about the second birth and says, "We are not born anew of a mother and father .....not by human will, and not by labour pains are we born anew, but of the Holy Spirit the tissues of our new nature are made; in water we are given shape..... and of water we are secretly born as from the womb... While it takes a long time for the body to be formed in the womb, of water and the Spirit, life of the spirit is formed in the wink of an eye....."

The nature of the new man and his aims:

The new man is spiritual. He is born of water and the Spirit, and he is not an earthly man made of dust. Thus his

nature is spiritual and so is his desire; his aims are spiritual and so are his ways.

Augustine explains the nature of such a new man, "We have two births; one is earthly and the other is heavenly, one is of man and woman, while the other is of God and the Church. The first makes us sons of the body and the second makes us sons of the Spirit. The former makes us sons of the world, but the latter makes us sons of God. The former makes us sons of the curse and anger and the latter makes us sons of blessing and love...."

We can compare the nature of the man in the flesh with that of the man in the Spirit by displaying the qualities of both as mentioned by Paul the Apostle.

† Those who are in the flesh: "They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; they are gossippers, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents."

† Those who are in the Spirit: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctfication and its end, eternal life. (Rom. 6:23).

† About those who are in the flesh, the scripture warns, "To set the mind on the flesh is death, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God, for if you live according to the flesh you will die." (Rom. 8:6).

† About those who are in the spirit, the scripture says, "To set the mind on the soul is life and peace..... "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are Sons of God. For you did not receive the Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship" (Rom. 8:14-15).

Our responsibility towards the new man:

St. Paul says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

This means that those who are born of God do not live according to the flesh, but they cast off the old man and wear the new man. Thus, there are two responsibilities:

† Take off the corrupt old man;

† Wear the new man.

As in baptism where, we take off our clothes and are immersed into the water naked, then afterwards the baptized wears white clothes, the same applies to our conduct in life; the faithful, he casts off all wordly deeds such as wickedness, shyness, cheating, lying an deceitful lusts and wears the armour of light, works of sanctification, frankness, giving, love and self-denial.

Paul the Apostle combines the two responsibilities together in saying, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.....let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light" (Rom. 12:2 and 13:12).

Can a person lead the two lives at the same time?

The Lord Jesus, says, "And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wine-skins; if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wine-skins; and so both are preserved."

What does the Lord mean by saying that no one puts a piece of new unshrunk cloth on an old garment? He means that Christianity did not come to correct some aspects of character and it did not come to change certain manners and types of behaviour into better manners... but it came to make a complete change in life and status so that through such a change everything becomes new... thoughts, emotions, will, qualities, 'temperaments', behaviour, treatment, aims, means and methods followed..... all these are sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit and by the work of Grace that is ours in Jesus Christ.

As to that person who tries to combine light and darkness... true and false.... spirit and flesh (flesh here does not mean the body but the corrupt will)..... the enlightened nature and the corrupt one; he is either a hypocrite or a self-deceiving person and does not yet know that light and darkness do not combine together and that Christ never agrees with 'Belial' (the devil).

Questions:

† How is the new man born?
† What is meant by the two births of the faithful?
† What is the nature of the new man?
† How do you know that you are born anew? How can this be recognized in you by others?
† What are the responsibilities of the faithful in relation to their new birth in baptism?

A problem:

Many people were baptized when they were babies, but they do not live according to what is expected from a new man;

— They would either repent, and the tears of repentance become an extension to the water of baptism.... On the other-hand their baptism is a judgement against them because they took the light and put it under a bushel.

Situations:

(1) Can you justify a baptized person telling lies to escape danger? (2) As a Christian, do you agree to the principle of 'the end justifies the means?' (3) What is your opinion about the principle that says, "One hour for your heart and another for God?" (4) What do you think of the conceited and dominating youth—does this nature conform to the spirit of baptism?

Activities:

† Make a wall magazine about "the new man." Make a contrast between him and the old man. Draw a symbolic picture to present the natures of the old and new men.

† It is important that you should confess at short intervals to renew the covenant of baptism.

† If you feel that you have done an evil deed, approach the priest and confess God with repentance so as not to spoil the dress of baptism, but to keep it always undefiled.

Tests for memorization:

Eph. 4:24

"Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Lesson 4 The New Man (2)

How does the new man grow?

As we need food and drink and all other physical processes for our physical growth, so in the same way we need spiritual food and spiritual drink, and spiritual processes for our spiritual growth.

The Food of the New Man

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "He who eats me will live because of me." The greatest food for man in the spirit is to have communion of the sacred body and blood of Christ. The Eucharistic 'communion' is the mystery of faith in which Jesus appears particularly full of love and supernatural light. The sacrament of communion is the living juice that makes the believer grow and bear fruit just as the sap makes the fixed (steady) branch of a vine tree grow, flourish and bear fruit. The truly faithful is certain that the eucharist is his spiritual food, for our Lord said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

If the Lord Jesus has said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me," then the truly faithful fattens his soul when

he feeds on the commandment. (Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became to me a joy). The commandment is satisfaction for the faithful soul, while the youth in the flesh feeds on uncleanness, greed, conceit, pride, haughtiness. Such rotten food fattens oneself and ends with man in hell.

One of the things that enrichs the new man is meditation on the Lord Jesus' love; it is the oil he lights his lamp with.... and it is the light that guides him on his way. Jesus' love is not merely happiness, joy and peace, but it is the best protection from slipping into the way of sin and malice. Augustine used to pray saying, "Oh fire, that is continually on flame, and that is never put out. Oh heat, that is always on fire, and never cools down. Light me with the fire of your love, that through your love, I love you alone."

A person who loves earthly objects becomes earthly, and the one who loves what is heavenly, becomes heavenly, and the one who loves Jesus is pure an perfect like Jesus.

The New Man's thought (mind)

The thought (mind) of the truly faithful has been illuminated by the light of baptism. He thinks of spiritual matters and looks at life through the cross as Paul the Apostle said, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." In another place he says, "But we have the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ means being in Christ so as to glorify the Heavenly Father, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." A spiritual person submits himself to the discipline of the Church. He loves the life of sharing and communion and refuses sectarianism and individualism and is keen about the union of heart, mind and will. The mental condition of the unfaithful (non-believer) has been

described by Paul the Apostle, thus, "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness" (Eph. 4:18-19).

Then New Man's Way of Life

† Those who are in the spirit, love Jesus and keep His commandments: their teacher is Jesus the Lord Himself who guides them into all truth by means of the Holy Spirit in them.

† The truly faithful takes Jesus as an example in his poverty and the way he emptied himself. He strives to be ready to leave everything for the sake of Christ for no slave is greater than his master.

† The truly faithful also follows the example of Jesus in his humility and so denies and renounces himself and refuses boastfulness, vanity and pride, ill-temper and self-admiration, for "every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:14).

The truly faithful follows the example of Jesus in enduring pain. As the Lord endured all pains even unto the death on the cross, so must we endure all distress in life patiently and thankfully remembering the Lord's saying, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

The truly faithful follows the example of Jesus in his meekness, remembering the situations in which the master faced his crucifiers and those who insulted him; thus he is keen to overcome evil with good and to meet violence with love and insult

with friendliness.... In this way you can follow on the Lord's footsteps in all situations of life.

The effectiveness of the New Man:

† The new man is a lamp put on the stand, so that it gives light to all world.

† The new man is a flame of love that melts the coldness and selfishness of the world.

† The new man is filled with joy which dispels the darkness of sadness.

It is said that Saint Seraphim, one of the Russian Saints, lived a life of happiness and fulness, that everyone going near him was enflamed by Jesus' love and filled with joy and peace.

† It is said that when the idolaters found that the eyes of one of the idols became meek and quiet, they asked it, "Have you met a Christian?"

† It is said that long ago a Christian was delighted to teach in Japan and was asked not to preach Christ. When the period of his deligation came to an end, his students asked him,"What is the secret of your being different from all other professors in the way treat us?" He said, "Jesus." Thus hundreds of students were baptized after the departure of this silent missioner.

Questions

1. And you, brother, being a Christian, have you any effectiveness in your school and society?

2. The Lord Jesus exhorted his disciples by saying, "You are my witnesses!" Check yourself how you witness to Him?

And every day, we make an oath to God in the Holy Liturgy when we tell him, "Amen, Amen, Amen, Your death, O Lord, do we preach. Thy Holy resurrection and ascension we confess."

3. Do we preach Christ by means of our meekness, behaviour and love?

4. Do we confess the resurrection of the Lord by our holiness, victory and triumph over the spirit of the world?

5. Read chapter 3 of the letter to Colossians and complete the following sentences. Study some of them and be careful to carry them out:

† If then you have been raised with Christ, seek .....
† Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you .....
† But now put them all away: anger, wrath .....

6. Compare the man in the spirit with the man in the flesh in each of the following:

† Mind.

† Sentiments.

† Family and social behaviour.

What are the most important virtues of the spiritual man?

What are the vices of the man in the flesh?

Activities

Draw a picture expressing the new life and hang it on the bulletin board.

Prepare for a seminar in which your fellows discuss the way in which a Christian should behave in society.

† Train yorself in the virtues that you are in need of, in order to make the new man in you grow.

† What are the marks which distinguish life in the spirit from life in the flesh, and classify them under the following headings:

That in Spirit	**That in Flesh**

Texts for memorization. Ephes. 5:15-16.

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise making the most of the time because the days are evil."

UNIT 2 TO DIE WITH HIM AND TO RISE AGAIN

Lesson 5 The Story Of Your Second Birth

We often witness the baptismal sacrament in the Church. Little babies are brought to the baptismal font by their parents and the priest baptizes them anointing with the Holy Oil. Now, let us see the meaning and implications of this baptism. Perhaps, you yourselves had asked this question since many of you were tiny sucklings when you were baptized.

Baptism is the second birth.

Our first birth into this world made us to be members of this earthly society. Sin, corruption and death are the characteristic factors of this world. Our death is the result of sin committed by our first parents, Adam and Eve. But Jesus Christ, our Lord came to the world to give us life and victory over sin and death. He gave us life, so that we can overcome the death and enter into the realm of a new life in God's kingdom. He made us possible to experience this new life, through a new

birth; a new birth in which we are ending an old life and beginning a new fruitful and everlasting life. This new birth or the second birth is the baptism, which was instituted by our Lord in His Church to be the door for salvation. "Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God " (Jn. 3:3).

1. Disclaiming the evil and receiving Christ:

In the baptismal liturgy, you might have noticed the godfather or mother taking a vow on behalf of the infant. He repeats the vow, "I disclaim you, O Devil, and all your defiled works, and all your evil hosts, and your nasty devils, and all your power, and all your vicious worship, and all your bad and

straying tricks,and all your army, all your authority and all the rest of your deceits.....I disclaim you.....I disclaim you." In the baptism we are getting rid off the agent of evil viz. Satan, and receiving Christ as the master for the rest of our lives. It is in a way antidote for what happened in the garden of Eden.

2. Receiving the Holy Spirit.

In baptism we are anointed with the Holy Oil. It symbolizes and mediates the bestowing of the Holy spirit upon us and the consequent new birth. It is the Holy spirit who acts inwardly to make us newly born and enter the kingdom of God, through the Holy Church. The characteristic mark of Christian baptism is this reception of the Holy spirit to guide us and enrich us with His gifts. The priest breathes on the face of the candidate for baptism and says, "Receive the Holy spirit and be a pure vessel unto our Lord, the Christ."

3. Death with Christ and resurrection with Him.

The priest immerses the candidate in the holy baptism water three times, reciting prayers. This exemplifies the burial of Christ and His stay in the tomb for three days. Due to the sin of our first parents, the whole humanity is punished for death. But God was not willing that we die and perish, so He sent His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to die in our stead. He instituted the sacrament of baptism in His Church to be the substituted means whereby God's judgement of death upon us gets fulfilled. So we actually die in a secret inward way in the baptism, with Christ, then rise up with Him to live a new life. So baptism is the means drawn by the Lord for the believers whereby they obtain salvation. "He that believes and is baptized

shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). St. Paul says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3,4) and also "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:5-7). Baptism is then a true death to our old sinful nature and a true resurrection in a new nature.

4. Entrance to the Kingdom of God—to the life of the Church:

Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ i. e. the Church. In other words we are made the children of God, in the sacrament of baptism. The Church is the House-hold of God, where the children of God live in joy and peace. The newly baptized are blessed to experience this life in the Church. The Church and Christ are related to each other like the body and Head of the same organism. The life of the body, the Church, is dependend upon Christ, the Head. It is the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, which is the life principle of the Church. The newly baptized are given holy communion just after their baptism. Only here does the baptism become perfect because it is through the Holy Communion that one truly enters the life in the Church.

Now-a-days some people claim that baptism is only for the forgiveness of sins and that it should only be given to the adults, who themselves should confess their faith in Lord Jesus. But we are blessed in our Church having permitted to enter the new life of the Church even as we were infants. The gift

of the Holy spirit is not limited for the adults only. (See St. Luke 1:41-44). The blessings of the spirit are also not limited to the adults; our Lord blessed the children who were brought by their mothers. Our parents and God-fathers (or God-mothers) were the believers on behalf of us in baptism. We can see that our Lord healed the sick mainly because of the belief of those who brought them. He even forgave the sin of a man only by seeing the faith of others who brought him. (See St. Mark 2:5). More than this, baptism of the infants has been the practice of the Church from the very beginning.

But now we are grown up so as to think and understand the meaning of baptism. It is the time for us to be responsible for our own lives.

Our parents and god-fathers might have instructed us in the ways of the second birth. We have now understood what this baptism is and so it is our responsibility to renew our vow of baptism and deepen and enrich ourselves in the life of God's kingdom. We should not behave in any way that would blaspheme the lovely name of our Heavenly Father. If we were

sealed and consecrated to the Lord, our responsibility is to keep that seal and holy consecration till the day of the Lord Jesus' coming. By baptism we have obtained the enlightenment and the opening of the spiritual mind by which we can see the diving light. It is our responsibility to keep this insight from the darkness of the world, from the blindness of sin, and the evils and ignorance of the devil, so that we can keep our baptismal garment pure and blameless.

Activities:

1. Try to read the sacramental liturgy and copy the prayers that were raised on your behalf. As to the vow of baptism and disclaiming the Devil, it is desirable that you remember them daily before going to bed.

2. Invite the priest to explain to you the rituals of the sacrament of baptism, and with him make a research into the blessings of that sacrament.

3. Make a bulletin about the sacrament of baptism, stress the vow of baptism, and encourage all your brethren to keep it.

4. Try to attend the sacrament of baptism in the Church.

Memory Work:

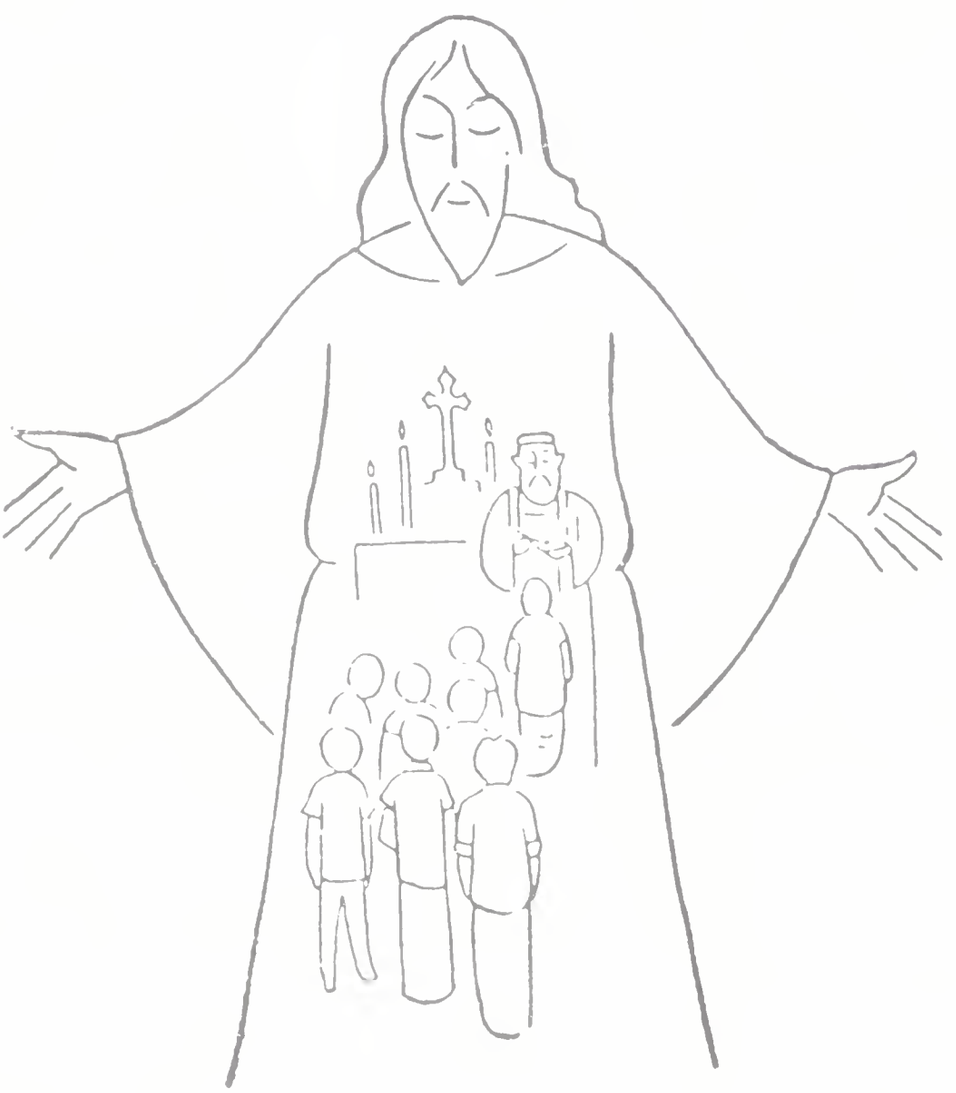
Memorize 1 Cor. 12:13.

"For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

Lesson 6 Unite with the Lord in the Sacrament of Eucharist

We are the flesh of His flesh and bone of His Bones.

"There is no greater love than this: that a man lays down his life for those whom he loves." Jesus' self-sacrifice was not restricted to the cross, but He gave the Church His sacred Body and Blood to be offered on the holy altar, so that believers may partake of them and unite with them in a spiritual union. It is the Lord who said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed " (John 6:51-55). The Holy Eucharist grants us union with God through partaking of His Holy Body and Blood.



Holy Eucharist, the Covenant with God:

When an agreement between two parties is confirmed they eat together (Gen. 31:54), and they consider it a covenant; then neither of the two has the right to break it; otherwise, he would be considered treacherous. Our Lord has willed to enter with us into a sacred covenant, but He did not confirm that covenant by common food, nor even by a sacred obligation like that of the ancient passover. He confirmed the new covenant with His own Body and Blood saying, "Take eat; this is my body. Take drink Ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28).

And that is why the Apostle Paul wrote about the immensity of the evil done by those who defile the new covenant which Christ has confirmed with His Blood. "A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be desired by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28-29). And on the night of our Saviour's sufferings, the Lord Jesus sealed the covenant between us and Him with the sacrament of the Eucharist; and that is why we call that day, "Covenant Thursday" for the Lord made a new covenant in it with His Blood.

Every time we eat of the Lord's Body and drink of the Holy Cup, we renew that covenant and confirm our faith in Him. We also declare our hope in awaiting His second coming —which is awe- inspiring and full of glory.

Confirmation in Christ.

The Lord Jesus says, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him" (John 6:56). The meaning of confirmation is that the relationship has reached such a level of deep attachment, that one of them has become pulled to the other by a strong tie that does not get undone or falls off.

We are anointed with the chrism only once, but we partake of the Holy communion several times in order to strengthen and confirm our kinship in the Lord, and grow in Him more and more.

Let us recall what priest says in the prayer of the Basilian Liturgy. "Make us worthy of partaking of your Holy Body and Blood that we may, by partaking of Your vivifying sacraments obtain the remission of our sins....and confirmation in the faith to the last breath in Thy Holy Name..."

The complete Union.

Christ dwells in the believer who worthily receives the holy sacrament and expels all His resisting foes, then Christ uncovers His glory and shows himself to the believer. Little by little the rays of Divine light spread in the heart and make it glow purifying all its incentives, inclinations and desires, and the believer becomes partaker of the Divine Nature.

The Apostle Paul has expressed this state, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, "By partaking of the Body of Christ and His Blood, we become united with Him bodily and

in this way we carry Christ in us, for His Body and Blood spread in our organs, and become partakers of the Divine Nature as says Peter (The Sacraments: Lecture 4 Section 3).

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is a Sacrament of Confirmation and Unity:

If the sacrament of the Eucharist unites us with Christ in His Holy Body and Blood, it is then the sacrament of communion between us and Him on one hand, and among ourselves on the other hand. The Apostle Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread " (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

In the first epistle of John, he says, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John. 1:6-7).

And St. John Chrysostom explains this unity and fellowship, "As the bread consists, united, of many small grains such that the grains do not show at all except in that they are present; and by uniting its mixture become undistinct, similarly is our unity with Christ and one with another, for you do not feed on one body and another on another body but we all feed on one and the same Body (Article 24 on 1 Cor. 1:17. p. 4). And, this is what the priest prays in the Basilian Liturgy, "Grant us all, Our Lord, to be worthy of partaking of your holy sacrament in purification for ourselves, our bodies and our souls to become one body and one spirit, and to have a share and heritage with all the saints who have satisfied Thee since the beginning."

Meditations:

Compare the effect of sin with that of the sacrament of Eucharist on the relationship of the individual with God. Study this, along with the first chapter of Genesis, and the gospel of St. John, Chapter 6.

Study the story of Zacheus and meditate on how he found unity with God and fellowmen (Luke 19).

Activities:

Present yourself to your Father confessor to prepare you for communion.

Make it a point to go with a group for communion together at close intervals.

Be always heedful of encouraging your brethren to be regular in confession and communion.

Make a poster explaining the blessings of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Invite one of your priests to explain to you the prayers of the Lord's Liturgy, and to answer questions.

Draw or paint the picture of a paten and a chalice.

Drills:

Train yourself to have your heart open unto the Lord Jesus and unto all people.

Memory Work:

Select some prayers from the Liturgy to learn by heart.

Lesson 7 I confess my sins

Most of us, when we do something wrong, feel inwardly very bad. If we have hurt or angered some one, or consciously disobeyed our parents and ignored our responsibilities, the things are not right with us. Such commissions and omissions are "Sins." They separate us from God, darken our consciousness and undermine our will. We can experience the real inward peace only after clearing all these faults and shortcomings. Just as we must wash to cleanse our body, we must wash away all our inner defilements.

What is "sin"?

1. Sin is going astray from God's Love.

The person who loves us more than anyone else is God. He never stops loving us, even if we stop loving Him. He makes our life possible on earth, by giving us all the things needed for our life. More than all, He made us His children to enjoy the life everlasting. But what He demands in return is nothing other than our obedience to Him through the love of Him and our fellow men. The parable of prodigal son tells us, the story of a son who went astray from the love of his father. The parable teaches us that our heavenly Father is always ready to receive us whenever we sinners approach him with due repentance. When we are not capable of recognizing His love towards us, we disobey God. It was what happened to our first parents,

viz. Adam and Eve. This is what is happening today also. Of course, we need a return to our loving father.

2. Sin is that which breaks our good relationship with others.

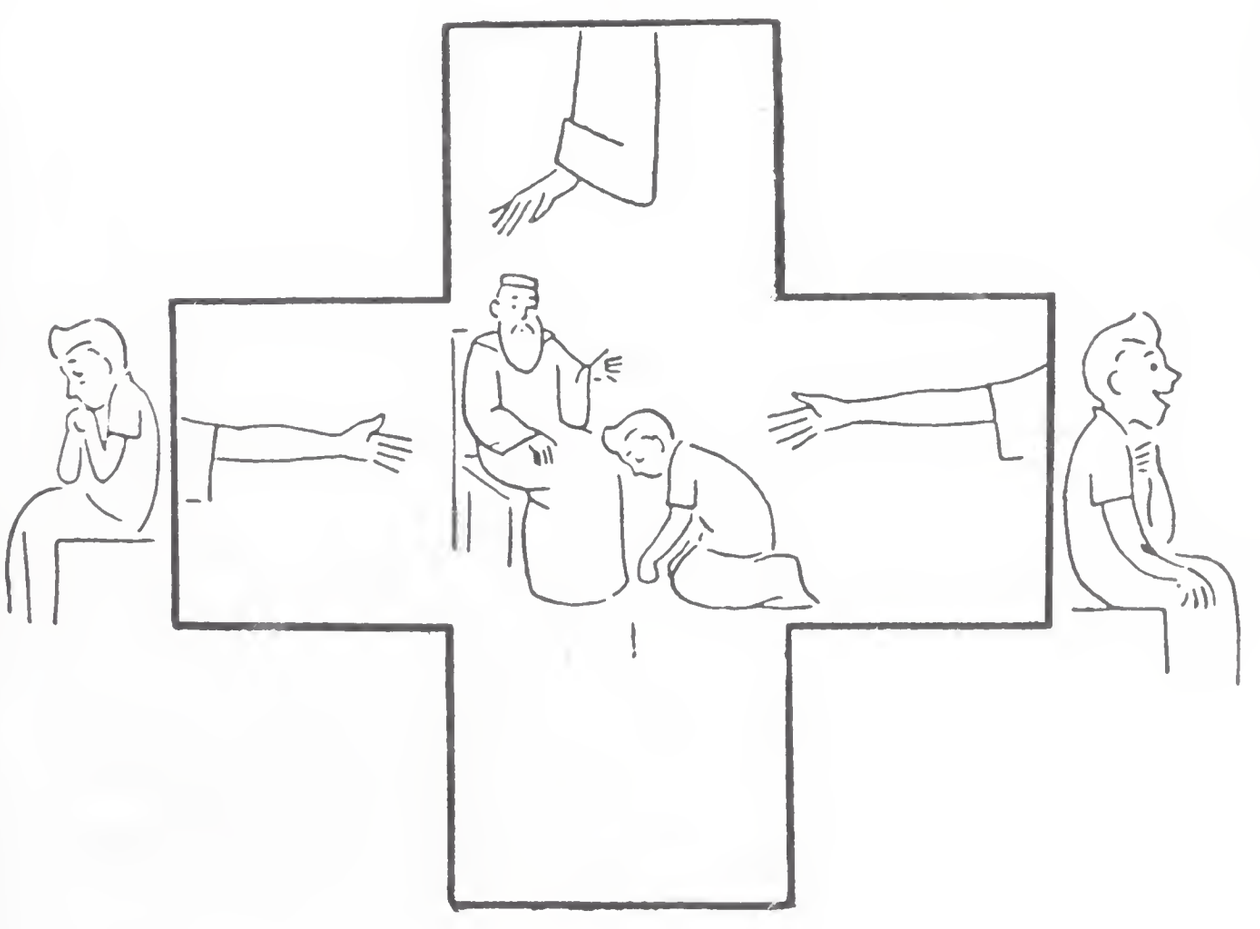
Man is a social being. So he has to confront many situations, in his family or society, which make him take certain definite steps. But if we are selfish and unloving of others, our steps will be against those of others. In such situations we may feel unable to go on with others in good relationship. This is caused by nothing other than the sinful mind and will. This will result in making us commit sins against our brethren. But we have to take necessary steps to guard us from such sins. The greatest commandment God gave us was to love our brethren as ourselves. We are not expected to be enemies to each other in this world. We are not worthy before God to worship Him unless we are in tune with our brethren. So it is necessary for us to review our life and renew it. Confession is meant for that.

So confession is a turn to God and at the same time a renewal of our relationship with others. To sum up, confession is a renewal of Baptism. A spiritual elder says, "The tears of repentance are an extension of baptism." And God has arranged for us to observe the sacrament of repentance to renew the covenant of baptism which we once entered into through the god-parents.

Why should we confess before a Priest?

Some may ask the question, "Why should we confess before a priest? Is it not sufficient to confess to God alone?"

Our sin is first and foremost against God, "against Thee, Thee only have I sinned' (Ps. 51). But our sin is also against the community, the Church, the Body of which we are members. Also sin is something which we commit against ourselves, because it causes inward tension, struggle and unrest. Confession before a priest helps at all these three levels. First, as a representative of God, the priest has the power to forgive sins, as authorized by our Lord. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). Secondly, the priest as representative of the Church and the community hears our confession and absolves our sins on their behalf. Thirdly, confessing our sins before the priest and exteriorising them provides the psychological help needed both for making our repentance real and for receiving the assurance of forgiveness. Oral confession provides a personal counselling and guidance needed for a new start. Also the "seal of confession" makes it obligatory on the part of a priest to keep in strict confidence whatever is said in confession. And it helps the penitent to unburden his mind frankly and fully.



Preparation for confession.

1. A contrite Heart.

The true believer sorrows and suffers when he retreats in solitude and remembers his sins, for he has angered God by trespassing against His law. The Holy Bible says, "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord, your God for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and repents of evil" (Joel 2:12, 13). When the publican knew his sin he stood in great agony and sorrow and deep sighing, asking for God's mercy and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And the apostle Paul says about this godly sorrow, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but wordly grief produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10). There is a wrong kind of sorrow which the Church discourages. It is the sorrow of fear of punishment or the sorrowful despair. Real sorrow brings forth peace of mind and determination to improve.

2. Dicision to improve one's conduct and change one's life.

Repentance alone is not sufficient. The prodigal son said when he repented, "I will arise and go to my father." He carried out what the Holy Spirit prompted him. And saint John the Baptist exhorted those whom he baptized, saying "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." We also should bring forth fruits meet for repentance, by the dicision to improve our conduct and life.

Confession.

a. Self-examination.

Take time by yourself waiting in prayer and recollection, *relying on* the Holy Spirit to guide you. Examine your past life, recalling all your failures and shortcomings. Make them concrete and definite. It may be a help to write them down. You can use some convenient Bible portions like, St. Luke 19:1-10, 18:9-14, 15:11-32 etc. as a help for self-examination (see the Appendix).

b. Prayers before confession.

Read the penitential Psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 129, 149), the penitential prayers prescribed in the prayer books etc.

c. Confess.

When you sit down before your Father confessor, tell him: "I have sinned my father, pray for me." Then mention your sins without unnecessary details and without misleading Brevity. Don't be kind to yourself. Judge and blame yourself that God may lift up His judgement from you. Be mindful to mention your gifts and talents and all aspects of power and weakness in your personality so that spiritual guidance may be appropriate, for confession is not only for mentioning sins but for spiritual, psychological and social guidance as well. Be mindful to keep in mind all the priests' instructions, drills and bits of advice so that you may practice accordingly. And if there is a drill that is difficult for you to carry out, tell the priest that he may give you what you can effectively carry out. When you have finished confession, go to your room and pray asking God to help you practice in daily conduct the exercises of your father confessor. Be very mindful to pray for God's grace to guide you in the way you are instructed in confession. Pray also for your father confessor that God may strengthen him to guide you more and more.

Problems which interrupt the spirit of confession.

1. **Embarrasment.** This is cured by true repentance and a clear feeling of the need for confession and the importance of the need for a spiritual correction.

2. **Time.** Confession should be done whenever necesary. The time could be arranged in consultation with the priest, so as to be convenient to both.

3. **Despair.** Despair because of having fallen in a particular sin several times is a problem. This is to be treated with patience and hope in God's mercies, and by exerting efforts, strengthening the will and having a sincere intention and by obeying the priest in all his instructions.

Activities:

1. Invite an experienced father confessor for a discussion about confession. Discuss with him any difficulty you find related with the practice of confession.

2. Arrange special occasions for the whole class to make their confession and receive Holy Communion.

Verse for Memorization.

"If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8, 9).

Appendix:

Some helpful questions for self-examination

1. Relationship with God.

(1) Am I conscious of God's mercies and blessings and do I thank Him in my daily prayers and through a more dedicated life? Do I realize that all that I have is from God?

(2) Do I love God more than all that I have, my relatives, my properties and even myself?

(3) How much money do I give to God? Do I spend much money on my own enjoyment?

(4) Am I a surrendered person? Do I live day by day in conscious dependence on God and alert to the guidance of heaven? Do I find time every morning for unhurried prayer and quiet listening to God as well as time for Bible study?

(5) How long it is since I decided to lead a Christian life? Have I grown steadily with the years?

(6) Do I love to go to Church? Do I realize that the adoration of God is the highest activity of which I am capable? In manner and purposes in heart and mind, with devotion and the highest sense of privilege do I give myself to worship?

(7) Do I spend lenten days as special opportunities to be in communion with God and to practice self-control?

(8) Do I receive Holy Communion as frequently as possible?

(9) How far am I in conscious dependence on God for His guidance and strength?

(10) Do I pray for the people of God, those who minister in holy things and those who serve the country?

(11) Am I really keen about leading a Christian life and doing everything according to the best of my abilities?

(12) Have I wished to conceal my discipleship for some reason or other? How far have I cared to bring others to God?

2. Relationship with others.

(1) What am I like at home? Do those who know me best, believe me most? Am I thoughtful of those who are serving me every day?

(2) Do I have a real concern for the lonely and poor?

(3) Can I work with other people? and can others work with me? Do I tend to dominate or leave the real work to others?

(4) Do I love the people I am called to work with and never criticize them to others?

(5) Have I a secret longing always to be the first? Can I hear my colleagues praised and sincerely enjoy it? Do I feel unhappy if I am not praised?

(6) (a) Am I critical of others? Do people know me as one whose conversation is constantly censorious? What makes me so critical of others? Jealousy? inferiority complex? hatefulness?
(b) Have I endeavoured to respect others and to speak all the good of others in spite of their unworthiness?

(7) Do I maintain an unforgiving spirit and harder dislike of other people?

(8) Do I give vent to anger? Do I despise and belittle others?

(9) Do I tell suggestive stories discrediting others?

(10) Do I honour my parents, elderly people, and those who serve God and the country?

(11) Do I obey in the Lord, elderly people and the spiritual leaders?

(12) Can I love the people whom I don't like?

(13) Have I excelled in simple kindness?

(14) How much of my life is really given to others, besides my relatives and friends? Do I honestly love them without ulterior motives? Is my love real enough to show itself in service?

(15) Do I speak the truth? Had I ever borne false witness?

(16) Am I strictly honest? Do I pay my debts? Do I keep others' properties to myself, if they had happened to come into my hands?

(17) Am I pure in deed, word and thought in my relations with the other sex? Have I indulged in homosexual sins?

3. Sins mainly concerning myself.

1. Do I give glory to God as the source of all blessings, when I am praised?

2. Do I claim glory to myself and blow my own trumpet without giving glory to God?

3. How far are my motives pure in my religious observances and service to others?

4. Am I a happy Christian? Am I poised and sobre?

5. Was I ever irritable and inaccessible to others?

6. Am I temperate in satisfying my bodily appetites like hunger and thirst, and in my sex-life?

7. How far do I have purity in heart?

8. Do I care to choose good novels, cinemas and friends?

9. Have I indulged in self-abuse?

10. Was I ever subject to laziness and lack of punctuality?

11. Do I put my treasures in heaven? Or do I think of 'getting on' in life in terms of worldly honours, a larger income or a higher post, instead of more of grace and more of Godly things?

While asking ourselves questions like these, it is better to find out the root causes and classify them. This will help us to fight against them more effectively. In the case of certain sins, it will be helpful, if we recollect the circumstances that led us to sin and also how frequently we had been falling a victim to it. These further details will definitely help us to plan a better future. Some such details will help the father confessor also to give a more effective guidance.

It is to be borne in mind in this connection, that all sins are to be found out and confessed without exception. As one disease is enough to kill man, one chain is enough to keep a man in bondage and one crevice is enough in a fortress to let in the enemies, so also one sin is enough for our spiritual death. St. James 2:10. 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.')

Lesson 8. I Pray Every Day

Prayer has an important role in the life of a Christian. Prayer can be personal and corporate. Our Lord Jesus was in his humanity, always a man of prayer. He taught us, how to pray, what to pray and showed us what the effect of prayer is.

Prayer is Communication and Union.

Prayer is not mere words uttered from the lips, but it is communication between man and God. It is admitting the Lord Jesus into our hearts. It is not our prayers that stir Him, but it is He who stirs to prayer. He declares His desire to enter our hearts; and our prayers are nothing else than our response

to his knockings on the doors of our hearts. The Lord says, "If any man open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). And this clarifies the strong and deep fellowship between man and God. Prayer is then the entry of Christ into the heart to use His power and authority in our lives, to lighten our burdens and to glorify God by providing for all our needs.

Prayer is struggle and endeavour.

Among the outstanding pictures of struggle and endeavour in prayer is the Lord's meeting with Jacob (Gen. 32). Jacob started remembering God's numerous mercies and faithful promises to him. He retreated to a place, where an angel wrestled with him until dawn. Jacob seized him and said, "I will not let you go, except you bless me," and the angel testified unto him saying "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Jacob expressed his unique experience in that wonderful night saying, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

The Lord Jesus has taught us that we should pray without ceasing, and He gave us an ideal example of persistence and determination in the story of the widow and the unjust judge and how she succeeded in making the unjust judge act for her (Luke 18:1-8).

There is another ideal example of struggling with God in prayer. It is that of the Canaanite woman. Our Lord did not want to disappoint her, but He wanted only to stress the need of perseverance, living faith and heroic struggle in petition.

The greatest prayers.

The Lord Jesus leads us to an awe-inspiring genuflexion in the garden of Gethsemane, the place which witnessed the greatest prayer ever said in the history of mankind. And his spirit was troubled even unto death, He knelt down and prayed and as He was struggling in prayer, He prayed with stronger persistence, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling on the ground. Jesus was bearing the sins of all of us. He says to us: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:36-46).

Individual Prayer.

The lack of desire and inability to pray should not make us despair for this is but natural. The body revolts against the spirit, but what is required of us is to come to the Lord with our weaknesses so that He may help us overcome them. Our old nature dislikes the opportunity of solitude with the Lord and tries to make this opportunity as short as possible. So, when at times we kneel down to pray, the Devil distracts us by bringing to our minds all our wordly concerns, disperses our thoughts and troubles our minds, so that the time of prayer becomes a tense struggle. We feel as though the time we spend in prayer is a sheer waste, then we stop praying and the enemy wins the round. Can such an experience be tolerated? The main reason for such distraction of mind and dispersion of thought is, *Self Centredness in Prayer.*

Selfishness, the desire to use prayer for personal advantage and cherishing one's own righteousness are dangerous. This requires that the person should become aware of his need for the Saviour and His righteousness, and meditate upon God's love; He should care to pray for the relationship with God trusting that God will provide for his needs more than he asks for

or thinks of. (Read the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—Luke 18).

The Treatment for laxity in Prayer is Prayer itself.

We need to be alert and active throughout the time of prayer. We must feel the presence of God with us, and realize that we are standing before the throne of grace, exactly as Isaiah had seen Him.

Let us have fixed times for prayer and keep them no matter what our circumstances are. We can use short prayers of recollection at every moment. There was a Saint who repeated the prayer, "Jesus, Lord, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner" with every breath.

Let us take care to use the Church's canonical prayers, compiled by the Church Fathers. They contain Psalms and spiritual passages which enkindle love, joy and peace.

Let our prayers be accompanied by scripture reading and meditation. When the Holy Spirit uncovers to us, in our prayers, our weaknesses and sins, we should not despair, but we should let Him bless us and forgive.

Every endeavour in prayer should bring us into closer harmony with God's spirit, for all of our troubles in prayer grow from our lack of harmony with God's spirit. The effectiveness of prayer increases; wherever we care to obey the Holy Spirit in every behaviour; whenever we consult God in our work and stand against our own desires (self-conceit, pride, love of praise, lustful look etc.) and whenever the heart is prepared for prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

Memory Work

Try to memorize some psalms to recite them in prayer, such as Ps. 23, Ps. 103 etc.

Memory Verse. Mark 11:24, 25.

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also Who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Activities.

1. Assemble some brethren and hold weekly prayer meetings at Church or somewhere else suitable.

2. Arrange prayer-meetings for the sake of a person or a subject, and offer thanks to God when the prayer is answered.

3. Set apart sometime for the prayers (hymns) of praise and thanksgiving that are sung in Church.

4. Set yourselves some prayers for certain concrete situations of life and use them at the right time and place.

5. Find out the Biblical passages, where you can find some type of a prayer, compile them and write down in a book, with title *"Prayers in the Bible."*

UNIT 3 WHAT SHALL I DO IN LIFE?

Lesson 9 Listening to others

Stop and think before speaking.

St. James, the apostle, wrote: "Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." These are the words of the spirit to the whole creation. Notice the wisdom in swiftness to hear and slowness to speak (James 1:19). The Lord Jesus himself, though He is the source of knowledge, science and wisdom, when He was discussing with the teachers in the temple, used to listen to them first, then asked them questions; and all those who heard Him marvelled at His understanding and answer.

Important rules for Discussion.

The Lord has clarified for us in the Holy Book the right attitude for listening to others and discussing with them.

1. The Lord expressed His appreceiation for others and as far as possible made that the basis for His opinion also. It was

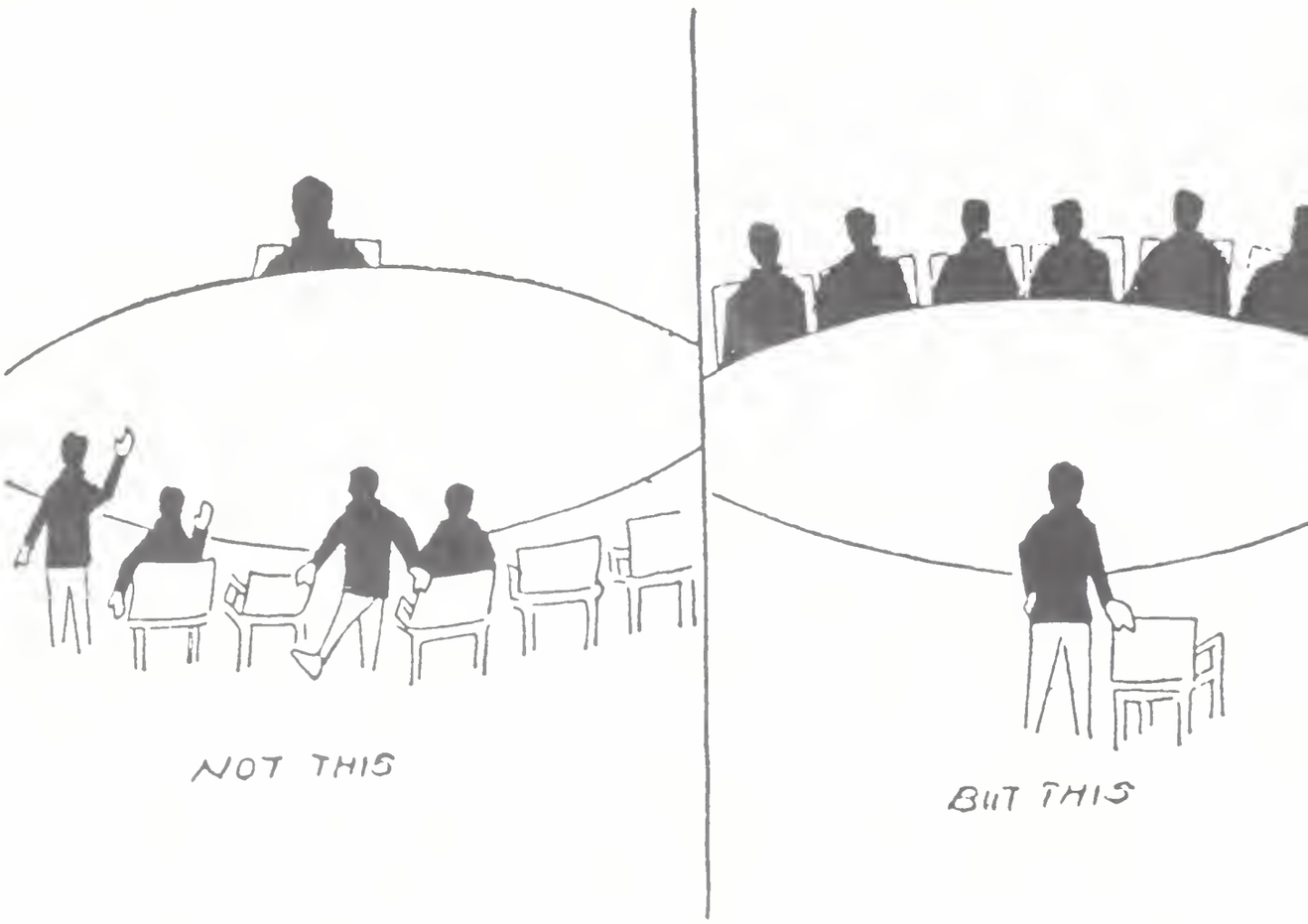
the Samaritan woman's opinion that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, but soon the Lord transferred her thinking to the gift of God and to the living water without reproving her. He is the one who said, "Love your neighbour as yourself." He teaches you to respect the opinion of others as you do your own. In fact, the best quality of a participant is not speaking too much, but listening to and understanding others.

2. But even more than that. He used to point out a good thing or a praiseworthy quality even if the arguer was in the wrong. He said to the Samaritan woman, 'You are right in saying..... you said truly." The discussion which is directed by love, appreciation and respect is constructive. But he whose aim in discussion is to falsify the words of the other whether on good grounds or not, should take heed from the saying of the Apostle Paul, "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15). Take heed not to pull down other people's opinions without any consideration for their points of view or circumstances. Let us also be careful not to betray confidence and scandalize others.

3. Concentrate on helpful words: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

4. Speak softly without anger: "A soft answer turns away wrath." The fruit of the spirit being love, joy peace, long suffering, gentleness (kindness), goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. We must be careful always to avoid anger.

5. So no matter how points of view differ, we are brethren discussing in calm atmosphere without any bias and prejudice but speaking the truth in love.



The purpose of the Discussion.

What is the purpose of any discussion? Arrive at the truth through the frank and free discussion of different opinions with a readiness to change one's own opinion if necessary, and to accept the opinions of others if they are proved to be right.

Does this deprive me of the right to oppose others.

It is your right to oppose the opinions of others on reasonable basis, even to question the points of view upon which those opinions were built. But you should get convinced yourself first within the limits of cooperation and understanding, without sticking obstinately to your own opinion.

Is it not right for me to hold on to my opinion so long as I am defending a given principle?

To abide by a principle is a virtue, but there should be no obstinate sticking to an opinion. The history of science shows us that even scientific opinions and principles are liable to go wrong. And to the extent every scientist benefits from the opinions of others and their experiences and experiments they are to be welcomed.

Does this mean that every opinion is liable to change after discussion?

Human convictions and discoveries are subjected to change as a result of discussion and in the light of new knowledge. But truth revealed by God can never change. The doctrines of the Church which belongs to the second catagory are unchanging.

Does this mean that the doctrines and spiritual truths are not to be discussed?

A discussion of these matters would not be with a view to find out whether they are right but it would be for their clarification and our better understanding and assimilation of them.

Questions that are to be avoided in discussion.

We should be cautions about asking questions in discussion group. *Unlearned questions* that rise from lack of knowledge, ignorance, and overlooking of clear truths will spoil the spirit of discussion. Refusal of the opinions of others without attempting to examine them or holding on to one's personal opinion

oneself a chance for assimilating other facts, all these lead to unhealthy discussions. *Foolish questions* are those made about insignificant matters that are not useful and relevant. Paul the apostle exhorts us to avoid these types of questions. If we have to listen to such questions we should try to give the discussion a constructive turn so that unnecessary strife may be avoided.

What should be my attitude to the person who differs from me?

First, keep in front of you this verse, "A soft answer turns away wrath" and read I Sam. 25:23 about the situation of wise Abigail, the wife of Nabal. Nabal wronged David and his men, but Abigail by her soft words turned away Davids' wrath, and by her convincing expressions prevented him from shedding blood and elicited the following verse from him, "Blessed be the Lord.....who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed by your discretion and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from blood guilt and from avenging myself with my own hand..... Go up in peace to your house."

Order and discipline in a discussion.

A discussion would be effective only in an orderly situation. A chairman who is a well informed, impartial, reliable and respected person is essential to keep up order. He should direct, evaluate and lead the discussion. Participants could get permission to speak from the Chairman and he should be obeyed strictly. The main aspects, contents, and issues of the subject for discussion could be outlined first and the participants are to be duly informed.

Questions and activities.

1. How would you feel if one interrupted you in a conversation?

2. What would be your behaviour if you were not given a chance to express your opinion in the discussion?

3. If, for example, you want to organize a club, how would you manage the deliberation and discussions about it?

4. St. James, the apostle, tells us in the introduction of the 3rd Chapter, "If any one makes no mistakes in what he says, he is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body also" (v. 2). Read the whole chapter and explain this verse.

5. In a discussion group, two mutually conflicting ideas are expressed, and supported by equal powers. How will you manage such a situation?

6. **Get ready to discuss.**
"Some people see that money is the god of this age."
What is yor opinion?

7. **Verse for memorization.**
Proverbs. 13:2.
"From the fruit of his mouth a good man eats good, but the desire of the treacherous is for violence."

Lesson 10 God and Money

We need money for our life in this world. Even, our primary needs of food and clothing cannot be met without money. So money is important in our life here on earth. But is it the most important thing in our life? Some people think that money is the end and aim of life and they are always busy trying to acquire more and more wealth. But it is a fact that such people are always restless. Some time they will find that they are deceived by their lust for money. How are we as Christians to deal with money? We can neither make it master over us nor despise it as totally abominable. Also our attitude towards wealth is determined by our right understanding of the relation between work and money. We shall devote some time to think about our attitude to both.

Our Lord says in the sermon on the Mount, "No man can serve two masters, (for either he will hate the one and love the other). You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24) and He repeats this in the parable of the unjust steward as He says, "No servant can serve two masters.....You cannot serve God and mammon" (Lk. 16:13).

Here we notice that the Lord Jesus points to money as being a master and even contrasts it with God for He says, ".....for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." The individual strives to hold to one of them, and this relationship leads to the love of one and the disdain of the other.

The attachment reaches the stage of worship, and gradually the worshipper is turned into a slave. If he is a slave of God, God rises him to the rank of sonship, but if he is a slave to money, then money becomes his master.

How terrible it is to serve two masters at the same time!

Does this mean that money is evil, and is money a means or an end?

Money is not evil, it is a means, a means required by the necessities of life, but it is not an end. What is important for one is the use of money in the right way, after one has acquired it in the right manner.

What is the Right way for Acquisition of Money—Faithful work

The right way to earn money is by honest work by your own efforts and strivings, by your faithfulness in your work as an inseparable part of your faithfulness to God, and by avoiding bribary in all its forms. Job the faithful reproves his friends saying, "Have I said 'Make me a gift?' or 'from your wealth offer a bribe for me'?"(Job 6:22)—Read (Matt. 25:14-30).

Why did the master condemn the man who had only one talent and praise the other? When others traded and gained, he kept it unused. How did the master praise them? By saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

What is the reward for faithful effort?....It gains him 100%. He enters in to the joy of the Lord and the Lord makes him ruler over many more things.

Some times we find people sharing the third man's opinion that the master is very hard on him who reaps where he did not sow. Why was the judgement so hard on him? The problem of the third man is basically laziness; and this is what led him to think of matters that did not concern him; for had he only striven and traded and gained another talent, his Lord would have praised him and counted him gain 100% like that of the second slave who had gained two talents only, and he would have allowed him to enter into his joy and made him a good and faithful ruler over many things.

Read II Th. 3:6-15.... "We did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you.....if any one will not work, let him not eat."

The monks usually eat their bread from the labour of their hands. Once a young man went to one of the monas-

teries purposing to become a monk. During his probation period he blamed the Father Monks for busying themselves with preparing the food, whereas they ought not to get busy with anything else than prayer; and they told him that they hoped he would be a leading example to them in that respect. He went to Church and started praying; they closed the door upon him, and he remained so to the end of the day but he could not bear his hunger and started knocking on the door and calling his brethren asking them for food. They opened the door to him, fed him and gave him a useful lesson that work does not come into conflict with our relationship with God, nor with our growth in spiritual life. It is a means for the acquisition of the necessities of life, and it is not right for the individual to live as a burden on others.

Therefore, what must be the Christian attitude to work?

We must strive and work actively like the first and second servants in the parable of talents. We must be happy with our works that ever it be and enjoy it as a means to serve God.

Obedience in the Lord to officers in authority is basic to success and completion of work. The apostle Paul clarifies to us the importance of complying with authority in general for it is from God (Rom. 13:1-5).

Faithfulness to one's work is an indivisible part of one's faithfulness to God.

My work is my vocation so I should—

— be honourable and useful to myself and to society. The Apostle Paul says, "For we are the workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

— consider personal capacities, interests, and gifts to be the talents given by God for better use and goodness.

Also do not get influenced by the professions of others nor by the position of the profession in society. Some of the apostles were fishermen, and Paul was a tent maker and even our Lord Christ himself worked at carpentry.

What does the Master Christ mean by His saying, 'Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's?.

All that is Caesar's (that is the temporal authority) must be given its due completely and with perfect faithfulness, and it is not becoming that we neglect our work, no matter what the reason might be, even if the excuse given be the service of God. Giving work its due share is part of our loyalty to God for St. Paul says, (in Rom. 13:5-7) ".....for conscience sake for this course pay you tribute also.....Render therefore to all their dues, tribute is due....."

Does Christianity forbid saving?"

Christianity does not forbid saving money but it forbids storing treasures; for those who teasure up money rely on it, and money becomes their aim and a master dominating them (read 1 Tim. 6:17-19). But he who saves money to serve a definite and just purpose is a wise person as Joseph who stored food materials in the seven years of abundance for the years of famine (Gen. 41-49). Also the apostles had a box wherein they kept their savings for deeds of kindness and mercy.

Questions and discussion:

1. Who serve God more; the rich or the poor?

2. What are the disadvantages of seeking money as an end?

3. What is the opinion of Christianity concerning: The employee who reads the newspapers in his working hours.

   Using the office facilities for personal matters.

   Writing down wrong information to reduce taxes and justifying this by saying one suffers unfair treatment in other respects.

4. Define your positions with respect to the following jobs offered to you:—

   You secured your qualifying certificate and remained unemployed for a long period of time, now you are offered job at an alcoholic drinks trading centre.

   A high salary for a job at a cabaret or a club for gambling.

   An exorbitant gain in return for trading forbidden goods.

   A deceitful means for realizing the greatest gain at the lowest cost.

5. "The individual must develop his gifts and benefit from them and be useful to others, and he should care to realize the greatest achievements possible within his capacities."

   What is your opinion regarding this statement? What useful work can you present in your family and Church spheres?

6. Why did the master praise the unjust steward (Lk. 16:8) and blame the rich fool (Luke 12:20 & 21)?

7. What is the opinion of Christianity about the love of money as seen through the following references.

   Heb. 13:5, 6
   2 Tim. 3:2
   1 Tim. 3:3
   Heb, 10:34, 35
   1 Tim. 6:10

8. Show how these were victims of money:
   (a) Balaam the son of Bosor (II Pet. 2:15) (Rev. 2:14)
   (b) Achan the son of Zerah (Jos. 7:19-26)
   (c) Gehazi (II Kings 5:20-27)
   (d) Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:2-5)
   (e) Judas (Matt. 26: 14-16 & 27:5)

9. Organize some collection programs among your friends and with that fund plan a project to help the poor.

Verse for memorization:

1 Tim. 6:10.

"For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs."

Lesson 11 Singleness of Heart and Soundness of Life

There are some people who preach good ideals but their lives do not conform to what they preach. They want respect and appreciation from other people. They have two personalities, one outward which is completely well polished but hypocritical. They have an inward personality that is distorted and disintegrated.

What do you think of them? Of course they are guilty before the eyes of the Lord. The scripture gives us many references to such persons and reproves their defects. Our Lord says to such men, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you" (Luke 6:46). Such a religion, He says, is false. "Not every one who says to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name and do mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never know you; depart from me, you evil doers'." Matt. 7:21, 22).

We Christians cannot be like them. Singleness of heart and soundness of life is expected from a Christian, more than anything else.

A true Christian aims at the following

1. **Perfection:**
   The goal of Christian perfection is Jesus Christ. Scripture says, "Every one who is fully taught becomes like his

teacher" (Luke 6.40). "And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Some people are so concerned with criticizing others, that they are blind to their own faults. "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but you do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Luke 6:41). The true Christian is different. He asks the Holy Spirit to reveal to him his own sins and shortcomings, and immediately seeks to overcome them. Fixing his eyes on Christ, he seeks to attain "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Thus he grows in grace day by day, becoming more and more Christ-like.

He is not swept away by false teachings, worldly living or other similar currents.

He does not compromise upon baseless grounds. He is sure of the validity of the Biblical principles and values.

Unlike the dead fish which is carried back and forth by the water, he can swim against the tide.

His criterion for life is "How God sees me?" not "how others see me."

2. He has a sense of Responsibility.

As one of the children of light, he feels responsible to work in harmony with his fellow Christian, "building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

He feels responsible to carry Christ's message to those who have not heard it, for Christ Himself has commissioned him to do that (Matt. 5:14).

By the power of Holy Spirit, he is able to change others, and to change the world (Matt. 17:20).

At the same time, he realizes his own need for continual purification from sin, and also for continual guidance. "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

3. He builds his own life upon the Rock.

Christ says, "Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them.....is like a man building a house, who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon rock; and a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it because it was built on rock" (Luke 6:47, 48).

The rock upon which the Christian builds his life is Jesus Christ. This is why the Christian can be sure of victory through faith in Him, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4).

The Christian can meet the challenges of the world with unshaken confidence: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phili. 4. 13).

Others might wrongly say that he is isolated from the group. In reality he is open to all, but sticks to his Christian principles.

He knows that the world disfigures and changes the facts, making virtue appear as if it were vice, charging the faithful with 'cowardice', the diligent with suffering from 'complexes' and the virtuous with "narrow-mindedness." As for the dishonest hypocrite, the world often considers him "clever." But a true Christian will not identify himself with such a world.

He will attain a degree of maturity which will enable him not to care for what the world says about him.

He will be able to contend against the spiritual hosts of wickedness taking the whole armour of God....and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6. 12-17).

Application:

1. Enumerate the good qualities in your friends and associates.

2. **Self-criticism**—(a) Try to discover your own sins and weaknesses and seek by the help of the Holy spirit to overcome them. (b) Try to take certain good dicisions and check how far you succeeded.

Memory verse:

"The good man out of the treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6.45).

Give colour to the good gualities in the separate columns.

	WICKEDNESS	HATRED	ENVY	HYPOCRISY		SIN	JEALO
	MALICE	FALSEHOOD		PEACE		ANGER	CHEAT
	BOASTING	LUST	GOODNESS	TOLERANCE	JUSTICE	DRINKING	UNTRU
	PRIDE			KINDNESS		INJUSTICE	CRUE
	BRIBERY			LOVE		COWARDNESS	CURRU
	ROBBERY	PATIENCE	MERCY	PURITY	SUFFERING	PITY	MALPR

UNIT 4 I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN

Lesson 12 The World Around Us

Sunday School group went on a picnic. Some sat on the grass and began to read. As they were reading different things, Mr. Hanna asked each one to tell the others what he was reading. The first said that he was scanning war news in various parts of the world. The second was reading a story, the third, an economics magazine, the fourth was studying the 13th chapeter of *Matthew,* the fifth was trying to solve a crossword puzzle. Mr. Hanna remarked that it was a strange assortment of material. Joseph, who was trying to solve the puzzle, answered, "Such is life."

Joseph's remark, though casually made, soon led to an animated discussion. He was asked to explain what he meant by that remark. He answered, "Economics, war, literature, religion, and general knowledge. In other words, a salad."

Another retorted, "No, life is not a salad; it is multicoloured carnival. We see and learn much more than our ancestors ever did. They knew nothing of life except the limited area in which they lived and from which they never moved until they died."

Through television, we can now see the whole world. We can listen to people who live thousands of miles away from us as they tell us of their various experiences.

Is it possible for contemporary man to live as the Bible enjoins upon us to live?

The saints knew nothing of the problems of our world. They lived on mountains and led a hermit-like life.

Mr. Hanna objected to the last remark and said that, to the Lord Jesus, religion was not something separate from life.

Simon, who had been studying the 13th chapter of *Matthew*, agreed with him. He explained how that chapter contains parables about the sower, the fisherman, the merchant, the landowner and the housewife—all of which indicate that Jesus mixed with people and that he regarded religion and life as inseparable.

"Christianity is practical," said Mr. Hanna, and he quoted Christ's words about how God will reward those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick (Matt. 25:31-46). Hunger, nakedness, and sickness were the problems of Jesus' day? They are also the problems of our own day, though we use different terminology in dealing with them. We speak of "socialism," "birth-control" and "disarmament." And what are these but methods of dealing with the same problems? If the Lord Jesus were here today, he would point out as he did before the essential qualities with which we would be armed in order to be able to combat such evils. (Discuss these qualities).

One of the students remarked that he was reading the *Epistle of James* when he came upon the following words, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you....your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you" (James 5:1-3).

Another showed that the Bible is closely related to society, and that some of its books, like *I Corinthians,* are chiefly concerned with solving contemporary problems.

Mr. Hanna assented to this, explaining that *Christ's method in dealing with social problems* is superior to all human methods. It may be summed up in three main points:

(1) He has not given us a set of rules to be followed blindly and slavishly, but certain principles to guide us.
(2) He gives grace to each person who trusts Him, enabling him to live by the light of the Holy Spirit and to conquer by His power.
(3) If we are true followers of Christ, then our Christianity should be closely related to the economic and social problems of our age. The Church helps us to utilize the inward resources which God has given us for the good of our society.

Questions:

1. How many of Christ's miracles are reported in *Matthew* 8 & 9?
2. What were the occupations or trades of Christ's disciples?
3. *Matthew* 25, *John* 2, *Mark* 11, *Luke* 2:41-51 and *John* 4, show how Christ did not lead a secluded life, but associated himself with the people of his day.
4. What are the most important items dealt with in the daily news-papers?
5. Why is the weather forecast regarded as a science, while fortune-telling is considered the work of charlatans?

Activities:

Study the following subjects as they are dealt with by contemporary authors, then find out what the Bible says about them.

1. Poverty and wealth in our world today.
2. Contemporary youth movements in the light of Sociology and Christianity.

Verse for memorization:

Matt. 10:16.

"Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Fill in the Cross Word:

Across 1. Mr. Joseph said, life is like a———

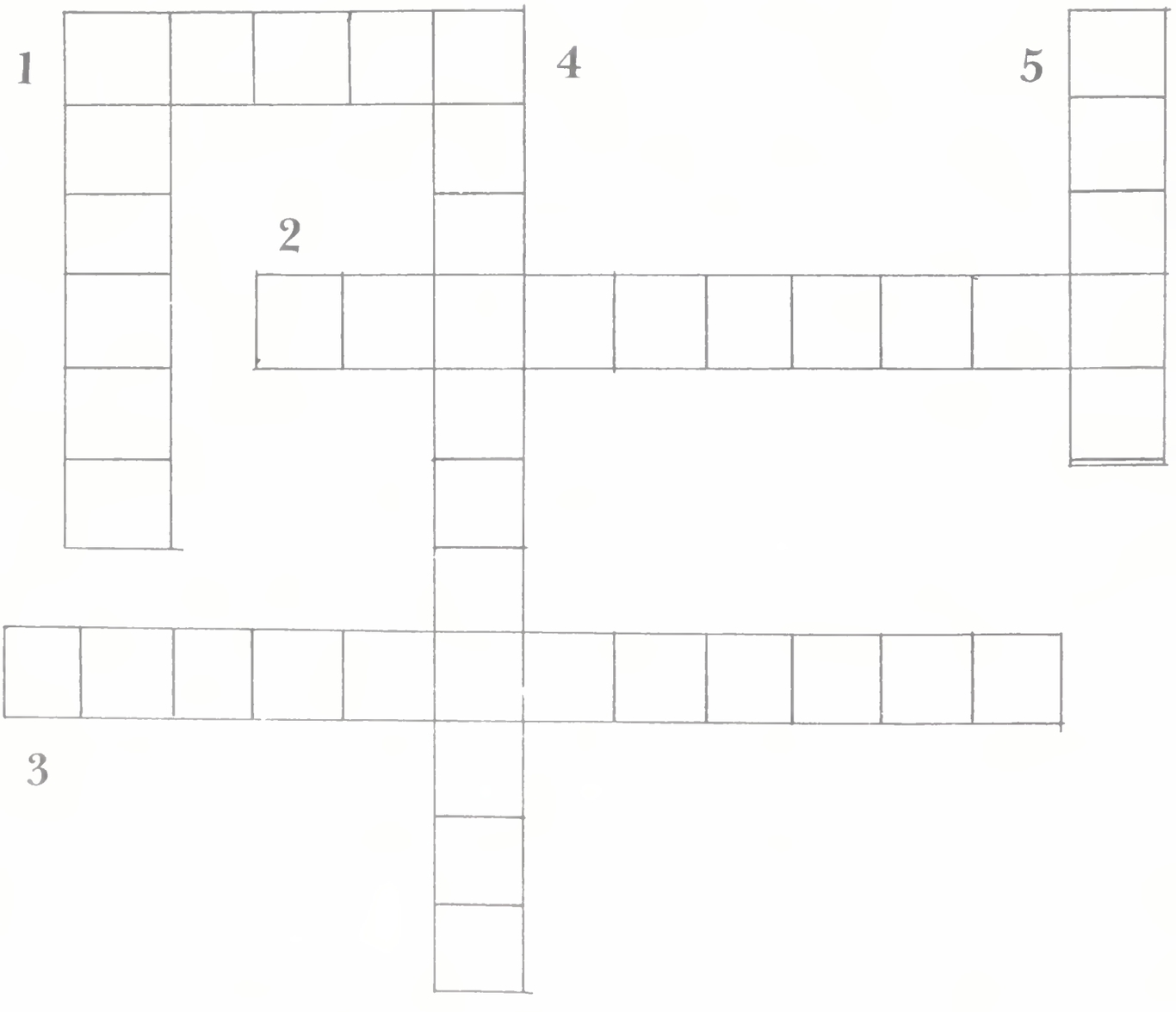
2. ———nourishes man's learning.

3. In Mr. Hanna' opinion———is practical.

Down 1. Religion is man's———of God and God's ——— of man.

4. War brings———of life and property.

5. St. ———is the apostle of Social Justice.



Lesson 13 Two Major Issues

(This lesson is strictly meant for discussion.
Certain helpful facts are given)

The students who are studying the subjects of poverty and richness, modern youth and society have a lot to share with one another.

1. Poverty and Richness.

Observations.

1. In many countries, including our own, the standard of living is much lower than it is in Western Europe and the United States. We are described as, "the backward countries," "the developing countries," and "the third world."

2. Nations which are economically advanced become richer every day, while the other nations become poorer.

3. Those who inherit riches are far less in number than those who acquire riches.

4. Those who become rich are much more active than those who are rich by inheritance.

5. Godliness is not related to any particular economic system. It may be present or absent under any system.

6. Famines and epidemics occur more in poor countries than in rich ones.

7. In most of the poor countries, there is a continual increase in population.

The Bible and the Distribution of Wealth:

In the Bible, we read of various societies and economic systems. You will find their modern equivalents in the second column:

Description	*Economic System*
1. The Days of the first Patriarchs such as Abraham and Jacob	Absolute freedom of ownership
2. Distribution of land among families or (Tribes)	Limitation of land ownership
3. The paying of the tithe	A minimum sum to be paid as charity tax
4. The first Church in Jerusalem	Absolute socialism

Causes of Poverty:

(a) For Individuals.

The cause of poverty may be enumerated as laziness— ignorance—lack of opportunity—inability to make the best use of existing opportunities—low wages—extravagance—squandering of leisure time—non-maintenance of property—too many persons in one family.

(Add to this, those others that you can think of, then divide them into two columns. In one column, write the causes for which the individual himself is responsible and in the other, write those which are the result of chance. Then arrange the items in each column according to their importance).

(b) For Societies.

The causes of poverty in societies may be ignorance—lack of natural resources—increasing population—wars—natural calamities—and unemployment.

(Add to these what you can think of, and again divide them into those for which society is responsible and those over which it has no control. Then arrange the items according to their importance.)

The Christian View of Riches and Poverty:

— Christianity is not a social or economic system. Its message is spiritual. By transforming individuals, it brings happiness to the community. Christianity helps human beings to have right relationships with one another and promotes social justice.

— Christianity maintains that all human beings are equal before God "For God shows no partiality" (Rom. 2:11) "For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 5:28).

— The Bible shows that the poor should be respected and warns against violation of their rights. "Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause" (Prov, 22; 22).

— Christianity teaches that the needy should be helped, since Christ identified Himself with them. "I was hungry and you gave me food.....as you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:34-40).

— Christ warns men, of dangers of riches: "It will be hard for rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.....It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:23). Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume..." (Matt. 6:19).

— Christianity does not consider helping the poor a favour to be conferred on them by the rich, but rather a duty each man owes to a fellow brother. "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him" (1 John 3:17). "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands an houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold...and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34-35).

Discussion:

What principles can we find from the foregoing concerning the raising of the standard of living of the poor?

II. Modern Youth and Society: Observations.

(These could be added to, or changed)

1. Young people at present are in a state of revolt against many things.

2. Young people usually describe older ones as "old fashioned," and "inactive, "while older people regard the young as "Straying."

3. Young people prefer amusement to any serious work.

4. Young people are fond of eccentric fads. Hippies are an example. The diminishing difference between the clothes of boys and girls is another example.

5. When young people reach maturity, the new generation of youth calls them "inactive" and "old-fashioned."

Characteristic of the Age:

1. Admiration of Science and Deification of Human Thought:

** Science has achieved so much that people have begun to think that the human mind is simply capable of anything. They forget that the maker of the human mind is God.

** By applying the methods of natural science to the study of human nature and society, many modern thinkers have come to the conclusion that there is no God, and that man himself is a mere animal. Their conclusion is false since spiritual facts are not subject to scientific verification.

** God's word is a sure guide in spiritual matters. We can know God through the Bible and through spiritual fellowship with Him.

Science is one of the gifts of God to man. It is merely a tool and can explain neither the Giver nor the receiver.

2. Love of Freedom:

Man has made great efforts trying to gain political, social and economic freedom. The Church recognizes the value of these different kinds of freedom. It believes, however, that there is another kind of freedom which is more important and which cannot be obtained through social or political system. It is the inner freedom of man himself.

Freedom is God's greatest gift to humanity. The first man was created free and given the choice either to obey or to disobey Him. He chose the path of disobedience, and became enslaved to sin. Since then, men have continued to inherit the sinful nature of Adam. Man could not be free again unless his sinful nature were conquered. Only a person without sin could conquer sin; and that is why God the Son became man and took our sins upon Himself on the Cross, making freedom available to us once more, through Faith in His redemptive work. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Atheistic existentialism maintains that we can obtain freedom if we stop believing in God. This is a modern form of rebellion against God and of justifying moral depravity.

Jean Paul Sartre, the French Existentialist, says in one of his plays that "Hell is other people." He believes that the very existance of other people limits one's own freedom. But we must agree that the greatest enemy of man is his own sinful nature which always seeks to enslave him.

3. Leisure and restlessness:

Modern man tries to conquer his feeling of isolation through various pleasures. Often he thinks that sexual satisfac-

tion or a luxurious living will solve his problem. But he is mistaken. The Scandinavian countries are among the most prosperous in the world today, and yet, the rate of suicide there is of the highest, as statistics have shown.

Christianity, while supporting wholeheartedly economic and scientific advances, realizes that these could not yet find solution to man's predicament in this modern world. The only solution is Christ Himself who gives "the abundant life" and "the peace which is beyond understanding."

Activity:

Write a research article about contemporary young people. In your article, try to arrive at the principles which you think should be followed by youth (not to exceed 400 words).

Answers to the Cross Word puzzle in lesson 12

Across
1. SALAD
2. LITERATURE
3. CHRISTIANITY

Down
1. SEARCH
2. DESTRUCTION
3. JAMES

Lesson 14 The Layman's Mission

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "You are the light of the world ..... you are the salt of the earth". It is to the Church that He says this. Light has a mission, i.e. to enlighten the world. Salt has a mission, i.e. to give flavour to the earth. Likewise, Church has a mission to the whole world, i.e. to enlighten and transform the world.

The Church is none other than ourselves. The mission of the Church is our mission. The bishops, priests and deacons are not the whole Church. Only if we the lay people join with them, the Church becomes complete. So our responsibility is not less in carrying out the mission of the Church. We have a mission as individuals and as a Church.

Our mission as individuals.

Personal holiness is the most important; "Put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander" (1 Peter 2:1). Our first duty as individuals is to get rid of these vices and *to grow in the Lord.* "Like new born babies, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up to salvation." This spiritual milk is none other than the word of the God that we hear from the Bible and the liturgy. St. Paul says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). Our goal for perfection is Jesus Christ, our Lord. His life example

on earth is what we have to imitate. There are a lot of Christians who could attract and win for Christ many people, through their sinless and virtuous life. You might have heard about St. Seraphim of Russia. Thousands of people rushed to him, only to see his face and hear some words from his mouth. Our individual life example is the most effective instrument for evangelism. He whose experience is genuine can say, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34.8). the life of Christians in corruption, and sinfulness is the most fatal enemy for evangelism.

Our Mission as a Church

St. Peter says that Christians are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" to "declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness unto His marvellous light."

A worshipping community

As the Church is a kingdom of priests, its mission is to act as a priest to the whole universe. The Church has to pray and sing praises before God on behalf of the whole world.

A holy and sinless community

Being the body of Christ and the bride of Christ, the Church is to be holy. Its holiness should be vindicated through the devout life of its members, and its victory over all corruptions.

Evangelizing community

The Church is here on earth to proclaim the good news in Jesus Christ. The social behaviour of Christian is the most important deciding factor in this proclamation. The early Christians had such a witness that others said about them "see these Christians! How they love each other!" There should be a spirit of love and co-operation among Christians. Only with this love, that we can love others, serve them, and proclaim Christ and His redemptive work.

A community loyal to the state and obedient to the authorities.

Our relationship to kings, rulers, governors and the civil authorities in general is exemplified in the first epistle of St. Peter. We can submit to the authorities without sacrificing our Christian faith and morals. Sometimes, we may have to suffer patiently and resist evil of the structures of society as well as the state. "But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval" (1 Pet. 2:21).

Activities.

1. Hold a panel discussion on: (a) How social problems should be tackled by Christians.
   (b) The role of the layman in Christian service.

2. Write a paragraph on "War and the Christian".

3. Suppose you are the only Christian employed in a factory, do you have any mission there? If there is, in which respects?

Questions

1. What can you do in your parish Church, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

2. Jesus' ministry to the world was three fold; viz. priest, prophet and king. We are sharers of His ministry. How can we share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly offices of Christ?

Verse for memorization.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Lesson 15 Guide-Posts for the Lay Ministry

Tendency to grow better and better is the nature of man. It is good to a certain extent, so far as it does not disturb the growth of others also. But some people want to become the first only to exert their authority and power on others. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the Master who lived as a servant. He was the King who lived as a slave. He also particularly taught us the criterion and quality for true leadership. He taught us that service is the true measure of leadership, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be great among you must be your slave" (Matt. 20:26, 27).

In our social life, as responsible Christians, we may be confronted with situations which demand our leadership and guidance. It can be in social and spiritual matters that we may have to lead and guide. A spirit of service, which our Lord taught and showed us must guide us everywhere. There are four qualities that characterize this spirit of service.

Godliness.

Godliness is nothing other than conforming to the character of God. The mind and will of Christ our Lord should direct us always. Our Lord was free from all sins and evils of this world. A christian leader, if he is to be genuine, must keep

himself holy, abstaining from all evils. Jesus did all things pleasing to the Father. Our motive in our social dealing should also be to please our Lord and God.

Sacrifice.

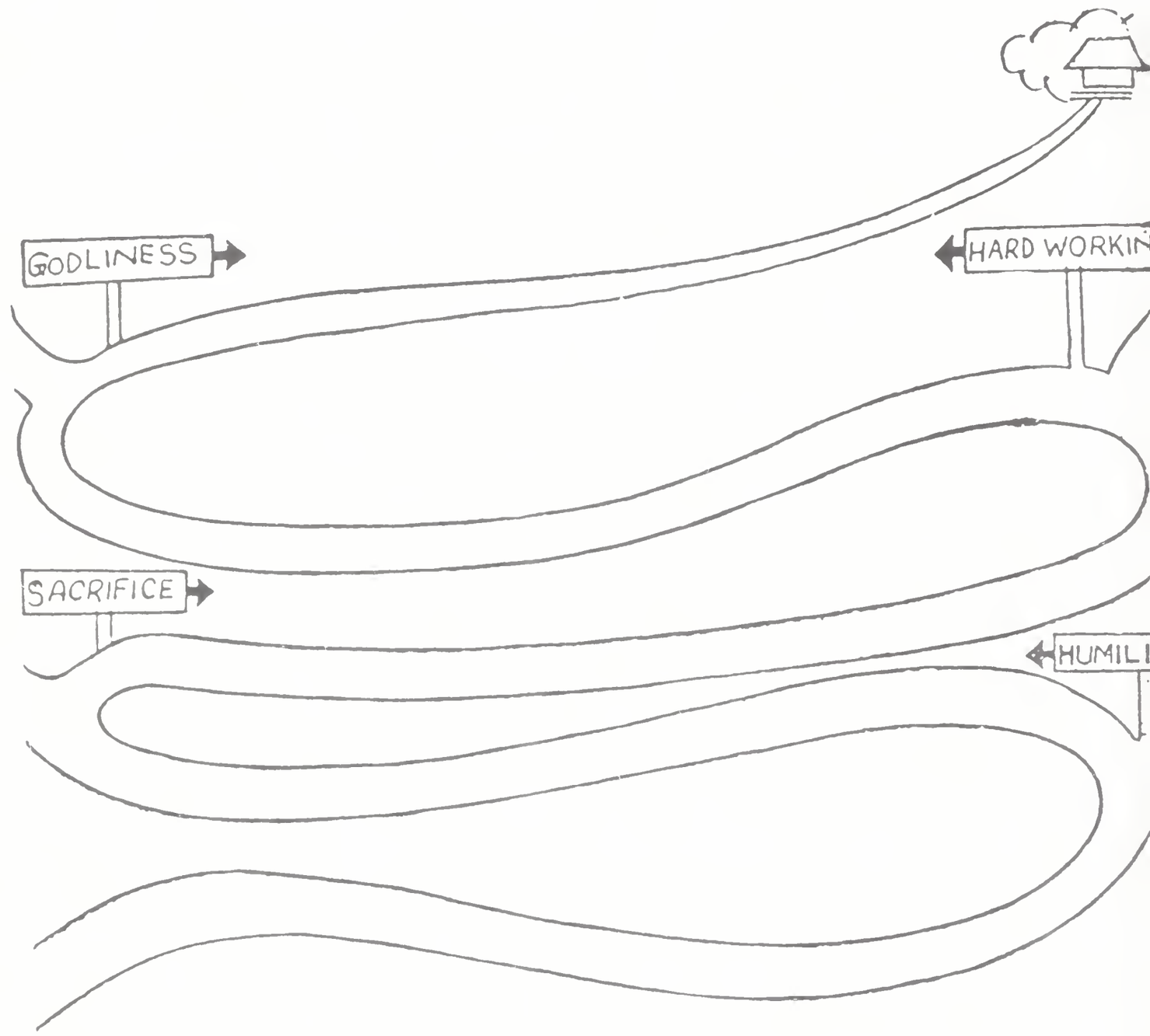
The spirit of service always demands sacrifice. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Earthly rulers and kings take advantage of the toil of their people. But we have to follow the example of our Lord, the King of Kings, who laid down even his life for others. We must not look for any reward for our service, "You received without pay, give without pay."

Humility.

Humility is the most important quality for a true Christian leader. Humility abstains from all types of domineering over others. It is accepting and respecting the dignity of others. It involves the recognition of one's own weaknesses and appreciating of other's merits. When Christ was asked, "who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?", He pointed to a child and said, "Whoever humbles himself like a child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven". "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lovely in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

Hardworking.

One who is conscious of his responsibility will work hard. He will not think of getting any reward or praise. This does not mean that he should work without any rest. He can probably utilize his time by a proper dispensation.



A good leader has authority over his group, without being domineering. People obey him because they recognize his love towards them. Love is always patient and kind. The following questions will help you to discover more the qualities of a good Christian leader. Arrange the qualities in the order of their importance.

1. Should a leader be patient. If so, why?
2. Should not a leader share his responsibilities with others whom he leads?
3. Should he work for the triumph of his own group at the expense of other groups?

4. Can a leader be partial to those who agree with all he says?
5. Does leadership require a proper training and self-discipline or is it the outcome of the divine inspiration?
6. Should a leader fight shy of criticism?

Activity.

1. Read 1 Tim. Ch. 3 which deals with the qualities of a Christian leader.

Verse for Memorization.

"Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

UNIT 5. YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Lesson 16 Pray for all people

Man prays for the whole creation

God created man out of dust. So man is a part of the material universe. But he has in him something which no other creation has. He is created in the *image of God.* Therefore he is related also to God. He has a mind, he has emotions. He has also freedom and a sense of duty to God. As the crown of creation it is his duty to bring all creation to the Lord; their creator. He is the mediator between God and the universe. He is the priest. All creation remains indebted to the Creator. Man as a priest, prays on behalf of all creation. He unites in his prayer the hymns and praises of the whole creation.

A moving example of the prayer that man is bound to offer to God for the whole creation is found in the book of Daniel. Hear the three striplings praise the Lord in the blazing furnace. "Praise ye the Lord, O heaven, O earth, O mountains, O valleys and waters, rivers and trees." This then is man's solemn duty to act as the priest of the whole creation to sing the praise of the Almighty God. In the eucharistic liturgy of James the priest praises "Let us praise the Lord with fear; whom the powers of heaven corporeal, and incorporeal; glorify the sun, the moon, all the stars, the earth, the oceans, the first born inscribed in heavenly Jerusalem, angels, arch angels, primacies, principalities thrones, dominions, powers, the many eyed cherubins, and the six winged seraphims who covering faces and feet fly up to one another and sung the sauetum....."

The Eucharist is the offering for the whole world:

When man sinned and fell, the whole universe was affected. The curse fell upon everything in creation. Man lost his innate right to offerfor the universe. Our Lord came to redeem man to restore him; to his former glory. He made creation once for all holy when he was pleased to take flesh from the virgin.

In His incarnation He united himself with the creation. He sanctified the whole creation by his sacrifice. At the last supper he consecrated both bread and wine, the fruits of this material world. The earth which yields wheat and grapes is blessed, our Lord transforms the bread into his holy body, the wine into his holy blood.

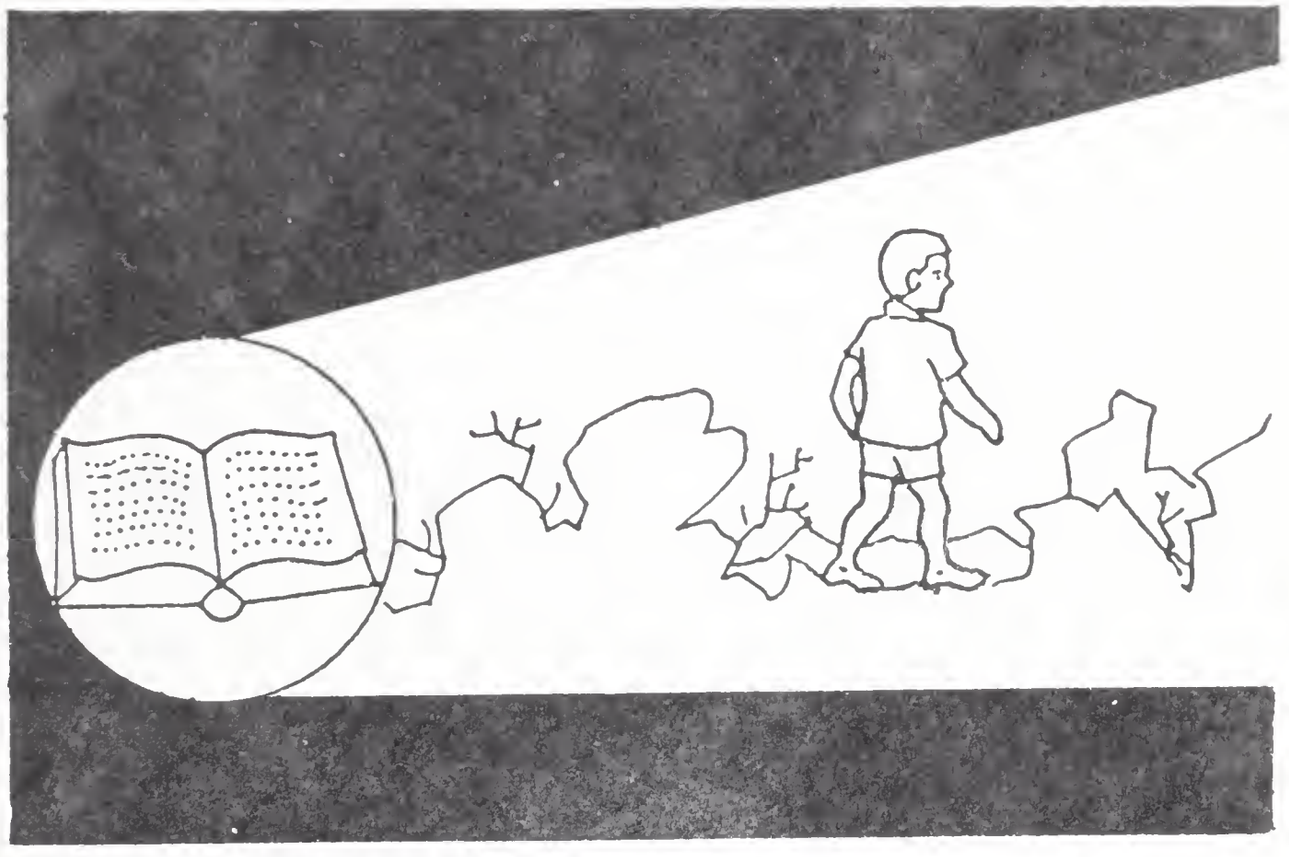
The H. Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Son of Man for the whole creation. In the eucharist the priest comemorates the act of sanctification in prayer. In the eucharist man is united to man. Man bears in him the praise of the whole creation. The whole creation seeks to be united to God in prayer through man. And when our Master, the Christ, came to redeem humanity, not only the individual was the center of his life and works, but He had in his mind the whole universe.

Pray without respite:

Our prayers are for the universe as well as our fellowmen. "God did not create man as a single individual." He created the whole humanity. Man is essentially a social being one who lives and grows in a community. He finds fulfilment in the community where fellowship works. True fellowship operates the way of this community which is the Body of Christ, where we participate in his flesh and blood. "It is the Church of the Lord." Man offers his prayers to God for the whole humanity and the whole creation through and in the Church, which is the Body of Christ.

In the Body of Christ each organ lives and grows co-operating with each other and helping each other reach its fulness. The liturgy and the canonical prayers of the Church are so arranged as to sustain the members of the body in common love and prayer. In the eucharistic liturgy we pray for the departed, the sick, the travellers, the faithful, living in all conditions of life.

Lesson 17 Live the life of the Gospel



The story of the Little Monks.

This happened in France. A group of monks, some years ago, came to realize that communism and atheism were spreading among the workers in the factories in North-east France. The monks sought permission from their Superior to work among the labourers. They put the worker's uniform, entered the factories and worked with the workers. The labourers tried to tease and ridicule them. But the monks continued to work in humility, love, and earnestness. Many of the workers were

impressed by the conduct and good behaviour of the monks. So they began to ask the monks for the secret of their joy, love and long-suffering. The monk workers disclosed that the secret of their lives lay in the fact that they were living in Christ. So many of the labourers believed Christ and joined the Church. Their conditions were reformed and the out-put of the factories increased owing to the workers' calmness and inner peace.

Imitation of Christ

This story helps us to understand how Christians can transform the society in which they live. We are called to take Christ as our 'model'. When Jesus called His disciples, he simply told them, "Follow Me." They were to follow his footsteps. This is what St. Paul says, "Be ye followers of me even as I am of Christ" I Cor. 11:1. He meant to say, "I place Jesus in front of my eyes and strive in order to do what I see in Him; so, take me for an example to you and walk in my steps."

At our baptism we responded to Christ's call and surrendered ourselves to Him. There he made us a new creation—God's sons and daughters. "You have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator" Col. 3:9-10. We are called to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the partaking of the sacraments, and perseverance in obeying the Gospel with the spirit of continuous prayer. The indwelling Holy spirit helps us in following the "Way" who is Christ.

Our conduct in daily life.

Place Jesus before our eyes at all times and in every work "Looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" Heb. 12:2. He is our companion and guide in our daily life. At every step ask the Lord, "Do you approve this or not?" The Holy Spirit from within would enlighten us. But the spirit cannot help us if we are not faithful to Him and accept His guidance obediently. We do not grow into the likeness of Christ by our own righteousness and conduct, but only by the work of God's grace in us.

Our relation to the Society

How do we conduct ourselves in our relation with others? Christ said "You are the salt of the earth." As such we have to penetrate into the society in which we live and transform it. Christ also said, "You are the light of the world.....Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mtt. 5:13-16). St. Paul reminds us to show the Christian spirit in our conversation, in charity and purity of life (1 Tim. 41:12.).

St. Peter asks the believers that "their behaviour among the nations be good, that whereas they speak against them as evil doers, they may be by their good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12).

All these point towards our influence upon the society in which we live. It was said in the history of the Church in Apostolic times that when a pagan looked peaceful and meek, the people told him, "Doubtless, you must have met a Christian and that is why these qualities have been drawn on your face."

Questions:

† What is meant by "the Christian is the salt of the earth and the light of the world?"
† What is meant by "The true Christian changes the face of the world?"
† Why is it that at present we are not able to effect a marked change in those around us?
† Give examples of great servants who influenced the society in which they lived.

Activities:

† Make a study of the lives of the missionaries and Christian leaders who lived the life of the Gospel and were able to change their societies.
† Make a series of discussions about the principles upon which the Christians live and extent of their influence to others.
† Read books which deal with the power of the Gospel to influence people.

Memory Work:

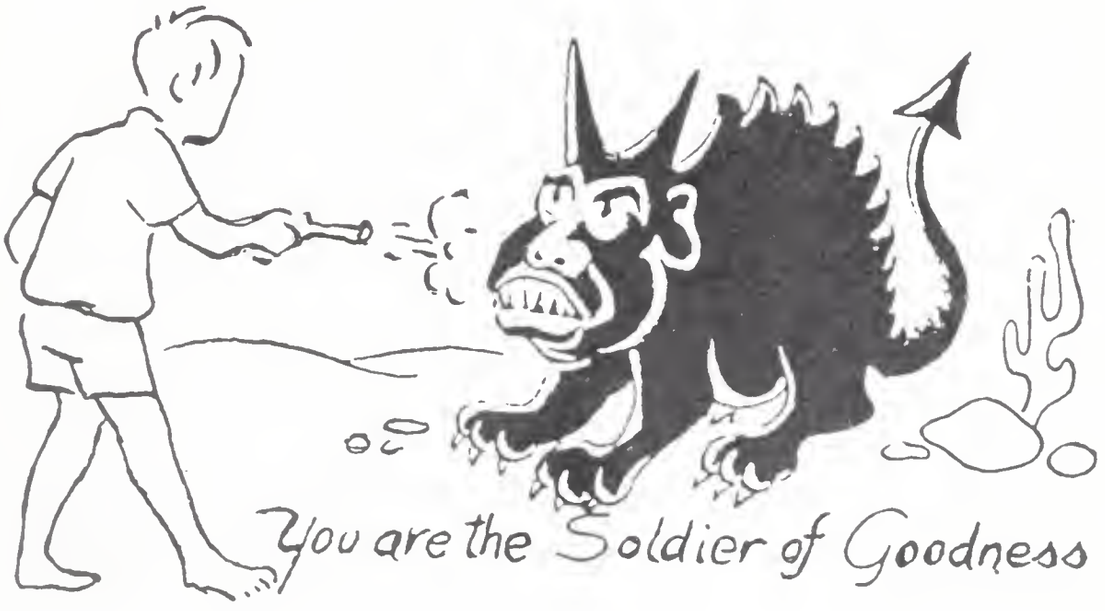
Mtt. 5:16. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Training:

Train yourself in the following:

1. Holding firmly to the name of Christ and His commandments.
2. Serving and loving all the people around you, regardless of their race, colour and doctrine.

Lesson 18 Wrestle Against Evil



Everyday we hear about murder, thefts, revolution, bribery etc. These are all evils that sap the vitality of humanity. The evil has been an experienced reality in the human history. Satan or evil force is always trying to paralyze goodness. He has been the prince of the sinful, fallen humanity. Our Lord spoke about him: "The Master of this world". Christ had to fight a lot with evil and at last he gained victory over the evil powers. He expects us to wage the same crusade against evil. We are Christians, who have constantly to fight with evil. One of the first duties of a Christian in particular and of the Church in general, is not to be conformed to the evils of this world and to stop fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. That is why the Church is likened unto Noah's ark which was in the midst of the waters. The Church is in the world, but the prince of the

world can have no hold on it. Now let us turn to the scriptures and see what it counsels us.

Abhor that which is Evil (Rom. 12:9)

The scriptures advise us to take active measures against evil. "Have no fellowship" with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. Similarly it says, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." And the prophet Amos cries out saying "Hate the evil; and love the good, and establish judgement in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious" (Amos 5:15).

Our Lord was filled with indignation to see the evil practices in the temple of Jerusalem. He at once took the necessary steps to eradicate them. Such a courage is needed of a Christian. If we are to be strong of heart to resist evil we have to be as pure as Christ was. But are we worthy of our Master. Often we find Christians themselves corrupted being great hotbeds of greed and cruelty. In many countries the upper class people are exploiting the poor and the working class. Many Christians are found among this upper class men. Christian officers are often as guilty of nepotism and bribery as any corrupt non-Christian officer.

There are merchants and agents who take advantage out of famine or war. As a result of their black marketting prices shoot up. There are people who make large profit out of black money. All these social corruptions will affect the social and financial set-up of a nation. These evil doers who are selfish to the core exploit their own fellow brethren. In some countries there are discrimination against caste, colour and race. A Christian is to fight against and overcome all these vices.

Over come evil with good (Rom. 12:2)

The only weapon of a Christian is goodness. This goodness is first and foremost good ends and good means. It is further the goodness which overflows in voluntary suffering.

In resisting evil, the Christian does not resort to evil means because he does not approve of Machivelli's principle that says the end justifies the means. Christianity's ends and likewise all its means begin with Christ and end with Christ..... In this respect, the Book says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. (Rom. 12:17) and in an other verse, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing" (1 Pet. 3:9).

He who has been armed with the spiritual weapons;-the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, the girdle of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness-can enter the battle-field confidently because he is putting on Christ. He will be able to pull down all the enemy's fortresses and subdue all thoughts to the obedience of Christ.

Fore-runners of the fight.

There are so many examples of Christians who put forth a formidable fight against the evils in society. St. John Chrysostom criticized the king, the queen and the rich ones of Constantinople. Many of the prophets of social justice and equality in this and last centuries were Christians. In France, Christians were at the lead of those who resisted the imperialistic war in Algeria. In the U. S. S. R. and the U. S. A. there are Christians who suffer in their ceaseless struggle for justice, racial equality and peace. Humanitarian efforts are in progress in Spain under the leadership of Christians, In Brazil Bishop Nathal stopped

the building of a Cathedral to sponsor with its cost a workers' city; putting into practice St. John Chrysostom saying, "Don't decorate the Churches if this should be done at the cost of neglecting your afflicted brother, for this altar is more glorious than that." The Basic Educational Movement is an International Christian Movement to fight against illiteracy. The World Council of Churches is also helping its best for the movements which fight against social evils. There are devout Christian men and women who work in the midst of orphans, and the socially outcast. Mother Teresa's charitable work in Calcutta, India, has already caught the attention of the whole world. But still there is the demand for more and more servants for Christ, to fight for His cause. He calls all: He will guide you. Be courageous enough to respond to His call! Be ready to suffer, joyful anything. He assigns to you.

Questions and activities:

1. Write a paragraph on "If I were a police-officer....."
2. What are the evil consequences of bribery?
3. Debate on "Communism is better in wrestling against social evils than Democracy."
4. Collect the paper news regarding good and evil in an year. Arrive at the general state of the world by comparing the sum of evil and goodness.
5. Draw a picture of a Christian wearing the spiritual armour, according to Ephe. 6:13-17 and write the names of weapons in their respective places.

Verse for memorization:

We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world, rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephe. 6:12).

UNIT 6 THE TWO SHALL BE ONE FLESH

Lesson 19 One Flesh

Marriage was instituted by God.

God created Adam to be the Lord and master over the universe. Then He found that it was not good for Adam to be alone. He made Eve to be Adam's helper and friend. It is written in the Bible that Eve was created out of Adam's rib. She is called woman because she was taken out of man. She is the bone of his bone, the flesh of his flesh. Though they are two persons, in marriage they form one flesh. "They are no longer two, but one." Man and wife are indissolubly united together. God binds them together, in marriage "they are no longer two, but one." This is the nature of marriage as instituted by God. Man and woman are united in marriage to love each other; each surrenders in love to the other. The man is the head, but the head can not remain with out the body. Woman is in no way inferior to him. Each finds fulfilment in the other as they enjoy the abundance of God's love in their love.

The graces of marriage

Man and wife are given the grace to increase and multiply. At the beginning God created them male and female and said, increase and multiply. Man as a species is to be sustained, hence procreation of children is divinely ordained. In marriage procreation does not take precedence over happiness produced in love. The grace of love and the grace of children go together with marriage. The Psalmist says "You shall be happy and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children will be like olive shoots around

your table. Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord" (Ps. 128). And he also says,"Sons are a heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb a reward." Jeremiah asks the Hebrews to take wives and have sons and daughters, take wives for their sons and give their daughters in marriage, to multiply there and not to decrease.

Marriage caters to a biological need

There is a tendency among certain people to look upon sex as taboo. Sex instinct is God given; the celibate may sublimate the sex energy for the good of the community. For the majority of people married state is the normal. In marriage, man or woman find a healthy gratification to sex energy. St Paul says, it is good that you remain like me, yet to avoid fornication you may marry. Marriage is thus necessary for the majority of people to lead a Christian life unstained by sin. However it is a mistake to look upon marriage as a way to cater to lust. Augustine warns us against the lustful who seek for wives just to satisfy their lust. Marriage protects a man from the follies of lust and helps him to lead an upright life.

Divorce to be ruled out except on grounds of adultery

The ideal state of marriage enjoyed by Adam and Eve in Paradise was lost because of man's disobedience. Thereafter often passion rather than love came to be the dominant motive of marriage. This has led to a variety of corrupt practices, such as polygamy (possessing more than one wife) and polyandry (possessing more than one husband). This has also led people astray-into adultery. In the Jewish society before the birth of our Lord, man enjoyed many privileges. He could take any

number of wives and even concubines. He could divorce his wife for very silly reasons. This was so even in the days of our Lord. A husband could divorce his wife for the simple reason that the dish served was a little too saltish. A Jew could cite the law of Moses to justify his action (Cf. Deut. 24:1). But our Lord objected to his practice. When the scribes asked him about divorce He replied "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." In the beginning man was united to woman in an eternal bond. Our Lord said that husband and wife are not two but one united by God. What therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Our Lord could not approve divorce. He said "But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matt. 19:9.) Marriage is a sacrament. It is indissoluble. The Church does not sanction divorce on any ground whatsoever.

Married state creates the realm of love

The question of superiority or inferiority does not arise in a married life based purely on love. St. Paul says that the woman must be subject to her husband, as to the Lord. But he asks man to love his wife as Christ loves the Church and to give himself up for her. He raises the relationship between man and wife up to the standard of the relationship between Christ and the Church. From the Christian point of view, marriage is a parentship of love and giving, and married life is that of love and abundance of grace. In it, the individual loses one's selfishness and offers to the other. It is love which is committed to the person. It is powerful because it draws from divine love. "It is the love with which thou hast loved me, which is without hypocrisy, built on rock, not shaken by the wind or the storms

of life." It is a fruitful overwhelming love, which can never be enclosed inside the hearts of husband and wife, just as light can not be enclosed inside the fingers of the hand. The fertility of love is evidently seen in that it changes the spirit of those who love. Love is also creative of good. It also leads to the blessed fruit which is the child. The love of the husband and wife gradually develops into parental love. St. John Chrysostom says, "These who actually bear fruit together become a union in Jesus in the coming life and union with each other in eternal joy."

Questions:

1. What proves that the model God has set for marriage is the union between a man and a single woman?
2. Why did God allow divorce in the Old Testament?
3. What are the aims of marriage in Christianity?
4. Saint Theophilos of Antioch, says, "The Family is the Icon or Image of the Church." Explain this in the light of your study of the relationship in love between man and woman.
5. What are the features of love between married couples?

Activities:

† Attending a wedding ceremony and realizing the aims of the Church behind the mystery of marriage.
† Collecting some texts about marriage from the Bible.
† Arranging a seminar in which a priest and a married Christian member attend and study marriage in Christianity.

Text for Memorization: Ephe. 5:21-23.

"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is Himself its Saviour."

Practice:

Praying for married people and for Christian families that God might grant them the spirit of chastity and sacrifice.

Lesson 20 The Mystery of Marriage

How beautiful the Bride is!!

Undoubtedly, you have attended a wedding party and seen how the bride adorns herself and gets ready to meet her bridegroom in a beautiful white dress. In fact, this beauty, and grace refer to the beauty of the Church and the ornaments to the virtues of the believers. The beautiful bride is nothing but the holy, pure and chaste church of God. St. John in his book of Revelation says about this, "When I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more, And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem; coming down out of heaven from God, *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*" Rev. 21: 1-2.

In the book of "Songs of Solomon" when Solomon wanted to express the love of the human soul to God, and the beauty God sees in us, and we see in Him, he said, "Behold, you are beautiful my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves, behind your veil." The human soul answers saying, "Behold, you are beautiful my beloved, truly lovely. Our couch is green." In another position, the soul declares her love for God by saying, "My beloved is mine and I am his, he pastures his flock among the lilies."

When you see the bride taken to her bridegroom amidst lights, joy and sweet tunes, and heavenly cheer, you should

always remember that the soul is the bride of Christ bought by his blood, and sanctified to be among the crowd, of the faithful, pure and blameless so as not to be judged.

Let us now follow some lines of the wedding prayers to see the beauty and the holiness of this divine sacrament:

† *In the name of our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ we* betroth the blessed son of orthodoxy the youth (N.) to his betrothed the blessed daughter of orthodoxy the maid (N.).

† Notice that the betrothal is held in the name of Christ because He brought the betrothed couple together and in His name they were united, and for His name they vowed to lead a sacred married life.

† Notice that the youth is an orthodox and so is the maid. This indicates that the church does not allow and orthodox to betroth someone different in faith, creed or sect, because the union is for Christ and through the Orthodox Christian faith.

† Notice that this announcement is not made in church except when the priest is sure that none of them has any objection against fulfilling the contract, whether physical, psychological, mental or social objection.

The Readings in the prayers of the Holy Matrimony: After the deacon's singing of beautiful tunes, the *Gospel* according to Paul is read from Ephesians 5, in which there are beautiful instructions concerning married life.

† Wives, be subject to your husbands.

† Husbands, love your wives.

† The relationship between husband and wife is similar to that between Christ and the Church.

Then *the Psalm and the Gospel* are read:

"As a bridegroom coming forth from this bride-chamber he shall rejoice as a giant running his course." "Your wife will be like a beautiful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table."

This Psalm is a masterpiece of beauty and splendour. You can ponder over it to see how it was wisely chosen by the church to show the blessings that come as a result of the union of husband and wife, and the blessed increasing offspring which is like olive shoots, and like the vine fruit in bunches full of joy.

As to the Gospel, it is from Matthew 19 , in which Jesus talks to the Pharisees about divorce saying that from the beginning God made them male and female; and that what God has joined together, man shall not put asunder.

This Gospel which sanctifies the union of husband and wife as a vow made by both of them exhorts them to live according to His instruction. None of them should try to separate from the other, but they should keep the union meant by God.

How beautiful is the song which expresses this union when the choir sings,"You, whom the Holy Spirit has attuned together as lyre, bless God always. In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, day and night, with a heart that keeps no silence."

† This union is like that of a symphony in which the tunes flow sweetly in harmony.

† It is like the union of heavenly angels who sing the heavenly glories in discipline and worship before the Throne of God.

† It is a holy union that never stops worshipping God with a warm sacred heart.

Profound Prayers

There are prayers said by the priest of which we mention: "*You, who were present at the feast in Cana of Galilee;* and blessed the feast there, and did change the water into very wine by the power of Your Godhead, bless and overshadow the feast of Your servants in peace and unity, and love: keep them, we pray thee, O Lord, hear us and have mercy upon us."

"Do Thou now, our master, we beseech you, join your servants (the son N. and the daughter N.) that they may be joined to one another in one flesh. Let them enter into the law of happiness; let them abide in sound doctrine. Bestow upon them the living fruit of the womb, that they may have joy in good offspring and peaceful times. Make them ready in all good work in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In these prayers, we notice the following points:

† That the church prays for the married couple to unite in the union of soul and body and to be bound by the bond of love, companionship in a life of sharing and love.

† That they might enter a life of joy. How beautiful this expression is! It shows that married life is a life of spiritual joy.

† That God might bless them with children and peaceful times. These are the blessings of married life; to bear the blessed fruit, and have sons and daughters in a life of chastity and holiness.

Thus, the priest continues to say many prayers that we wish you could follow with your teacher, either in a wedding ceremony or in the written sermons of the sacrament of matrimony.

The Crowns:

Then the priest takes the crowns and prays over them:

† Let them be unto them a crown of glory and honour.

† A crown of blessing and salvation.

† A crown of joy and gladness.

† A crown of happiness and rejoicing.

† A crown of virtue and righteousness.

† A crown of wisdom and understanding.

† A crown of comfort and strength.

When the priest puts the crowns on them, then puts the garments upon them, he makes the sign of the cross. Then the choir answers saying:

"Worthy, worthy, worthy, is the bridegroom and his bride."

The crowns refer to the coronation of husband and wife sovereigns of the kingdom of their home and the pouring of heavenly blessings upon them in this new kingdom.

"At your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir" (Psalm 45:9).

The Advice of the Church:

At the end of the blessed sermon, the priest reads to the betrothed couple the advice of the Church, of which we extract; "Now that you have come at this blessed hour before the temple of the Lord of hosts and His sacred altar."

"You, blessed son, you have to take your wife with the sincerity of heart, purity of conscience, and do your best for what is good for her, and to be kind to her; devoted to what pleases her heart, and from now on you are responsible for her instead of her parents."

"And you blessed sister, you have heard what your man has been advised to do; so you have to honour him; and respect his wishes and his will; and help him with your meekness, your wisdom, your tender emotions, and your dutifulness to lead a life of quiet peace and comfort..... he is your head after your parents..... you always have to receive him sweetly and with a smiling face, not giving away any of his rights."

How beautiful are these pieces of advice!! If every husband and wife remembered what the church has told them on their wedding day, how blessed and peaceful and joyful their life would be!

Questions:

† What does the Church aim at by making the wedding (betrothal) a contract?

† Why does she (the church) lay a condition that the two partners should be orthodox?

† What are the aims of the church in addition to the aims mentioned in the lesson?

† Why are the crowns put on their heads? and why are they anointed with consecrated oil?

Activites:

† Attend a wedding ceremony and ponder over all the prayers.
† Study the book of the office of holy matrimony and think deeply of every passage.
† Make a wall magazine about the ritual prayers and pieces of advice of a betrothal Ceremony.
† Hold a seminar in which a priest attends to explain the rituals practised in the sacrament of matrimony.

Text for Memorization: Ephe. 5: 22-30.

Note: This lesson follows the prayers and order of the holy matrimony in the Coptic Church.

Lesson 21 The Family

The Family from the Christian Point of View

Man was never meant to live alone, but rather to be part of a family. That is why in the very beginning, God created

Eve to be a companion to Adam. And God blessed them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Ideally, sacrificial love and spiritual fellowship should have united the first family and the members of all subsequent families, in much the same way as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are united. But sin entered into the world through the envy of Satan, and tore apart the unity of the first parents, introducing elements which were never meant to be there such as lust, and the desire to dominate.

Christianity has brought back to the family what it lost through the fall. Through unity of faith in Christ, the Christian family comes into being. When two committed Christians become man and wife, they are united by a bond of sacrificial love and spiritual fellowship in the same way as the Church is united to her Saviour and Bridegroom. That is why St. Paul says, "As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 6: 24-25).

We note that in these verses the husband is not told that he has the right to dominate his wife, but rather that he should love her sacrificially, *as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her.*

Parent Children relationship

St. Paul says, "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord* for that is right. Honour your father and mother..... that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." (Eph. 6: 1-3).

St. Paul's instructions remind us of similar injunctions given in the Proverbs of Solomon. Here are a few:

— "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke" (Proverbs 13:1).

— "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother" (Proverbs 10:1).

— "The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked up by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures" (Proverbs 30:17).

When Jesus lived on earth, He gave us an example of true sonship, that we too may follow in His steps and be conformed to His image "in order that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 3:29). Although He was one with the Father He was obedient to sacrificial death on the cross. In spiritual fellowship with Him, we may today live a life of loving obedience to the Heavenly Father in the Holy Spirit.

Christian sonship does not stop at respecting the parents. St. Paul says, "Obey your parents *in the Lord.*" Our first loyalty is to the Lord Himself. Jesus was aware of this from His earliest years. At the age of twelve, He told His mother, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? (Luke 2:49). He meant the Heavenly Father.

A Christian child is part of a larger Family than that of his earthly parents and brothers. He is member of God's Family As Jesus said, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother " (Mark 3:35).

The responsibility parents

As a son's duty is to obey his prents, so also parents should see to the physical, psychological, social and intellectual needs of their son, training him up in the way he should go, so that when he is older, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 23:6). As Solomon said, "He who loves his son, is deligent to discipline him" (Proverbs 13:24).

Above all, parents should see to the spiritual needs of their children, so that they would grow to the knowledge of God, having fellowship with Him and with the other committed should not be prejudiced in their relationship with their children, neither should they be domineering. Rather, they should encourage them to make the best use of their potentialities in all spheres of life. St. Paul, writing to fathers, says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Christian parents should be patient with their children, trying to understand them, and bringing their problems before the Lord in prayer.

Problems connected with Family relationships

Domineering Parents

A child who has domineering parents should prayerfully and patiently seek to grow in the knowledge and love of God. When he is more mature, he may discover that his parents are not so domineering after all. Anyway, through spiritual and mental growth, he will be in a better position to discuss things with his parents.

Negligence

Parents may neglect their children spiritually if they are not committed Christian. In this case, the child should have a spiritual father who would guide him in the absence of parental guidance.

Favouritism

Parents may favour one child more than his brothers and sisters, or they may treat one child worse than the others. Or husband and wife may disagree with each other about the methods of bringing up their children. All this need much prayer as well as the help of spiritual counsellors.

The Death of One of The Parents may lay a greater burden on a child than he would normally bear at his age. If the child has been taught to love and honour God, his new responsibilities will give him maturity, and he will be a great blessing to his home.

Questions:

— Point out the role of the Christian Family.
— What are the needs and duties of sonship?
— What are the needs and duties of Fatherhood?
— How should a son react to the following:
  (a) a domineering father.
  (b) a mother who favours a younger child.

— What harm results if children are left without any parental guidance?

Activities

— Study an educational book about family problems and how to tackle them.

— Take part in a panel discussion about family relationships in the light of the Gospel.

— Invite parents to a meeting with one or more priests to discuss the problems of young people.

— Edit a wall magazine about parenthood, sonship, and family relationships.

Application

If you have a family problem, bring it to God in prayer. If you cannot think of any problem in your own family, pray for someone you know who has such a problem.

Lesson 22 Brother and Sister

The beauty of brotherliness

The brotherly relationship is a beautiful one. It is a relationship of fellowship and love, a relationship in which loneliness and alienation have no place. Solomon says of it, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). He also says, "A friend helped is like a strong city, but quarrelling is like the bars of a castle" (Proverbs 18:19). The Old Testament gives us an ideal picture of a brotherly relationship between two friends. In its true love and faithfulness, this relationship between David and Jonathan is stronger than any family tie. (Read 1 Sam. 18-24 and 2 Sam. 1).

Brotherliness and Love

God has commanded us to love one another. The test which shows whether we really love others or not is our relationship with them. Unless we love God first, we cannot truly love one another. That is why the first commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Then comes the second commandment, "You shall love your neighbour is either alienated from God, or has never loved himself. If we despise ourselves, we are probably living in a hell of hatred, envy and judgement of others.

Atheistic Existentialism, under the leadership of Sartre, rejects others, regarding them as enemies of the individual's freedom. Christianity on the other hand, does not regard brotherly love as a bondage, but rather as a blessed opportunity for the individual to come out of the prison of the self into the warmth of sacrificial love. Gabriel Marcel, an eminent Christian Existentialist, says, "Brotherliness is Paradise."

Brotherliness and Self-discovery

A person cannot understand himself as long as he is in the prison of the self. Once he is out of the prison, he begins to discover many things, about himself. The saints were able to discover their own sins and shortcomings through their relationship with others. Our spiritual fathers can understand the weakness of human nature through their relationship with human beings. Very often what annoys us in other people has roots in ourselves. If I come into conflict with my proud brother, this is because I, also, am proud. If were humble, I would not resent him so much. Man rejects his brother if that brother exposes his inner-weaknesses.

Our Lord said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 14:334-35). He also said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15: 12-13).

St. John the Evangelist shows that brotherly love derives from Christ Himself; "By this we know love; that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the

brethren. But if any one has the world's good and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3: 16-17).

Brotherly love is a reflection of Christ's love for us. Only those who have truly experienced the love of Christ, can give others brotherly love. The Lord Jesus said that the one quality which distinguishes His disciples is love for the brethren. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples."

Extended Brotherhood

A Christian considers all his fellowmen his brethren. Like the good Samaritan, he regards as his brother everyone who needs his love and care. His love starts at home, extends to his countrymen, and reaches out to the whole world.

Some Biblical Verses about Brotherliness

"Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation" (James 1:9).

"Do not speak evil against one another; he that speaks evil against a brother, speaks evil against the Law and Judge the Law" (James 4:11).

"If yor brother sins against you, go and tell him his faults, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church; and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a gentile and a tax collector" (Matt. 18: 15-17).

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yorself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burden, and so fulfil the Law of Christ" (Gal. 6: 1-2). Also refer 1 John 4:7-21.

Questions

What are the causes of quarrels between brothers?
What is the importance of brotherliness from the Christian point of view?
How should you treat your brother at home?
What do we mean by saying that brotherliness is a means of discovering one's own self?
How far should brotherliness extend in the life of a Christian?

Activities:-

If you are not on good terms with a brother or sister, try to make it up as soon as possible.
Give a birthday present to a brother or sister.
With the help of a priest or a spiritual leader, hold a panel discussion about problems of brotherhood.
Look up more Biblical verses about brotherliness, and memorize some of them.

Application:-
With the Lord's help, seek to be humble in your relationship with others.

Do not judge others, but bear their burdens.

Verse for Memorization:-

"He who loves his brother abides in the light,and in it there is no cause of stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2: 10-11).

UNIT 7 WHAT IS THE ORTHODOX FAITH

Lesson 23 God's Work, and Man's Response

The appreciation of Orthodoxy

In the series of lessons to follow, we will acquaint ourselves with a number of examples of the Orthodox spirit and its conception of faith. The Church is indeed in need of a new generation which appreciates and finds pleasure in the essence of Orthodoxy. A true knowledge of the Church helps in illuminating our path to Christ in order that we may live a life of fellowship in the body of the Lord.

Since the earliest times, Orthodoxy has been free from those events which have, through the ages, influenced both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches. The Roman Catholic Church has indeed suffered a great deal during the struggle between itself and kings. It has led the Church to attribute divinity to ecclesiastical authority, to claim infallibility for the Pope, to issue indulgences and exaggerate the physical and outward forms of worship.

The Protestant Church also suffered in its turn. It came into being in a violent protest against the corruptions in the Catholic Church. It attacked the corruption of the ecclesiastical men and in so doing went to an extreme in its attitude towards priesthood. It objected to many an ecclesiastical tradition and Church system holding that there should be a direct spiritual contact without the mediation of the priest. To them rites and traditions are of no avail as these come between God and Man, the Bible being the one and sufficient source of all authority.

Orthodoxy, on the other hand, has remained consistent in its views. It has always considered man in his totality as spirit, body and senses who partakes of God in Christ.

How is Man saved?

This is a subject which gave rise to a great deal of discussion among the different churches. Is Man saved by faith alone? Are not works of any importance at all?

Churches have split on this issue:

† Man cannot be saved by works alone. "For without me ye can do nothing" (John 15 : 5).

† Grace does not save you without your submitting your will to it. In the precious words of St. John Chrysostom, "God does wish to grant us the kingdom while we open our hearts to Him."

Examples:

Joshua and Moses:

While Joshua was at the head of his army engaged in war, Moses was standing on a hill-top with his hands stretched out on either side (like the cross) (Ex. 17:11). The question is whether Israel prevailed that day because of Joshua's fighting men or because of Moses' supplication? It does not seem good to choose the one over the other since both are together necessary; that is, grace and works together.

David and Goliath

How was David able to overcome Goliath? The answer is that David was able to do so by God's grace, but nevertheless he had to fight, to come forward to run and choose certain stones and to aim accurately. He also had to overthrow the man, draw his sword, and finally kill him. All of which are works.

Similarly in the struggle of the spirit

It is in no doubt a war. You have to struggle with all your power which you receive from God, and use all your weapons namely the most perfect weapon-the grace of God.

Discussion

1. Discuss the Protestant view saying that salvation is through faith not works supporting their view by the test, "Man is saved by faith not by works of the law," and the rest of the passage (Eph. 2: 8-10). For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

To answer this view, refer to passages of Paul speaking about His Lordships (Heb. 12: 1-4, 2 Tim. 4: 7-8) show that our struggle is related to God's work in us (Col. 1:29).

2. Discuss the Medieval Roman Catholic view which believed in the effect of certain actions and recitations and readings of prayers and their repetition in penance of certain sins.

3. Discuss the Orthodox view that 'Metanoia' and fasting are exercises for the body to participate in worship, and prayer; and that they are not as means for forgiveness of sins. *Metanoia* a Greek word means a turning of the mind, thought or of life. Thus through metanoia we offer our selves to God in contrition and humility placing our lives in His hands.

The Orthodox makes a comprehensive approach to the concept of salvation. It does not hold that salvation is by grace or works alone, but instead it sets before its eyes *the work which Christ has accomplished for us,* and strives *to achieve a response from the side of man.*

The work of God and the response of man

What the Lord has done in dieing on the cross *was done for us,* it was done for the whole of mankind, and no human being in his degraded state could have accomplished it, "If one died for all, then we are all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Thus we can reach God through the offering of Christ. "He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

BUT: God does not save man without man's will, because He recognizes human freewill; in other words *he who refuses to share in the Lord's cross has no share in the resurrection,* and *he who does not choose the death of the self has no share in eternal life.*

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Our participation in the cross is a prerequisite if we wish to belong to Christ.

"Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10).

Therefore, it is *our part to struggle* for this purpose and to will sincerely to *pursue self-denial* in following the Master determined to *submit ourselves to God* all through our life.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Questions and Activities

1. Salvation is a matter of continual interaction with God comprising the whole of man—spirit, body, senses—in which the divine power is revealed by means of man. Clarify this meaning and show its practical application in our lives.

2. Show the role of grace and struggle in any of the Church sacraments; example, the Sacrament of penance.

3. What were the practices rejected by Paul the Apostle? What distinguishes the works of faith from those of the law and personal justification.

4. Give the Orthodox view on the following matters and explain:
   Man is saved by grace alone.
   Man is saved by his own works and good character.
   Man is saved by the Church and by being an active member of it.
   Man's salvation does not depend on any mediation on the part of the Church, but his personal relation with God is sufficient.

Verse for Memorization

"He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Lesson 24 Scripture and Tradition

† If it is accepted that the Law of Moses was written in the 14th century B. C., then the question is, what were the teachings and commandments which governed the behaviour of men during the centuries which preceded Moses? There is no doubt that there existed oral teachings transmitted from one generation to another; and this is what is meant by *tradition*. Also there is a similar question how the early Christians preserved the words of Christ and kept them even before the writing of the first gospel. "By oral tradition" is the answer.

The earliest tradition of the church was founded when the early Christians assembled on the first day of every week and devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, to the breaking of Bread and Prayers (Acts 2:42). This practice was the basis for the catechumen and the canon. The teaching of the Apostles and the canon they set came later. They aimed at the organization of the afairs of the church by defining the responsibility of its members and its system of worship.

The next step was for the church fathers to set to record in their books a great part of what they had received from the Apostles themselves: and thus give the final form of church prayers, rites and liturgies.

Finally, the age of the Ecumenical Councils gave their decisions and canons which are considered the foundations of the Christian Creed.

The Meaning of the Tradition
(see 1 Cor. 11:23 and—1 Cor. 15:1-3).

1. The Tradition is a practical means for the application of God's commandments in the Bible. Tradition is the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Originally these were the teachings delivered by the Lord to His disciples. The disciples, in their turn, kept it alive in their hearts and passed to the believers through the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is not only found in books, for it is spirit and life carried from one heart to other. It is a life of experience.

Christ: He did not spread His message by the writing of books, but by the preparation of people in whom He planted a living faith by the power of the Holy Spirit whom He sent to the whole world.

The Apostles: Their mission was to preach Christ and to present Him as living in their lives to other man. Sometimes it was sufficient for idolaters merely to see the Apostles or to listen to their teachings in order to become Christians. As for sinners, they were captivated by the virtues as embodied in the Apostles and they too came to seek forgiveness.

2. The Place of the Bible in Tradition

Tradition preserved for us the authority of the Bible to discriminate the books inspired by God from books of heretics. Tradition has similarly been the source for the commentaries made on the Bible by the ancient fathers who had contact with the Apostles.

The Church, in its turn, aims at preserving its traditions in conformity with both the books of the Bible and with the

spirit of its texts as constituting one unit of faith. In brief, Church Tradition was a source through which we received the heritage of Christian faith. It has survived through the ages, handing down to us the experience and knowledge of the Church, through the work of the Holy Spirit in it. Tradition lives through ages and centuries pursuing its way towards achieving its highest goal at the end of time.

Objections and Discussions
(Discuss these objections in the light of the verses given and what they mean to you.)

1. Some people may object saying that the traditions were later on written by the apostles and included in the Bible and hence there is no need for any non-recorded tradition.

Answer: The apostles have emphasized in their books the important role played by oral tradition. They admit that their works do dot include everything. (*Read* 2 John 12, 1 Cor. 11: 34 and Jn. 21:25).

The Apostles were in fact in the habit of adding to their written books, the oral teachings, comments and explanations and handing it all down to the believers.

"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me do" (Phil. 4.9).

Read the words of Paul to the Thessalonians asking them to hold fast to the traditions and to keep away from him who does not live according to it (2 Thess. 2:15 and 2 Thess. 3:6).

2. Some may object saying that the Lord Jesus blamed the Jews for holding firmly to tradition saying, "Why do you transgress

the commandment of God for the sake of your traditions? (Matt. 15:3). See Matt. 15:1-6.

Answer: The Lord Jesus Christ objected to those particular tradition, which were against the commandment of God, created by the scribes and Pharisees for fulfilling their own purpose. Explain Matt. 15:5.

According to the unanimous teaching of the Church fathers, Christian tradition is the commandment of God and does not contradict the Bible.

3. Another objection may be raised that the Scripture is complete in itself and any addition is contrary to God's commandment as according to the text Deut. 4:2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it."

Answer: This is a warning against changing the Word of God and does not, by any means, imply that there should be no tradition. In proof of this, in their writings the Apostles made use of events drawn from Jewish tradition such events which were not mentioned in the Old Testament.

See Mat. 2 "He will be called a Nazarene."
Jude. 9 Moses' burial.
Jude. 14 Enoch's prophecy.
Gal. 3:19 The Law was given through the Angels.

From sayings of the Fathers

Church Tradition testifies for the Bible

St. Augustine said, "There is a clear-cut limit separating the works dating after the apostolic age, from the books of the

Old and New Testaments from which we have received its authority from the Apostles and all through the succession of Bishops."

Church Tradition explains and comments on the Bible

Papias said, "I do not hesitate to place in your hand my commentary of all what I have diligently learnt from the men who were contemporaries of the Apostles."

Church Tradition preserves the Orthodox Faith

St. Basil said, "Part of the beliefs preserved by the Church come from written books; while part of it is what we have received according to the tradition of the Apostles, and both parts are efficient in worship."

Questions for discussion

1. Is our faith related and connected with the lives of our forefathers the saints and Apostles? How is it that we came to receive this heritage of faith? What is the role of Holy Spirit and its work in this matter?

2. State the benefits of tradition in the Orthodox Church:
   (a) In faith and creed
   (b) In rites

3. If you were asked by a Protestant friend the question, "Could you find me a passage in the Bible to show that there existed an altar, priests' garments, set church readings during worship and pictures or icons hanging on walls?" How would you answer?

Lesson 25 The Church and The Individual

(Authority in the Church)

The Church was born on the day of Pentecost. This event was accompanied by strong signs: an earthquake, a tempestuous sound, the shaking of the place, fire-tongues descending from Heaven, and languages and tongues spoken by the disciples. All of these were signs manifesting that Heaven had granted the Church power from the Highest and supported her with authority from above. But what could be the source of this power and authority?

It is the power of the Holy Spirit who assured us from the very beginning that God dwells in the Church.

When the Apostles had received the Holy Spirit, this wonderful spiritual power given by God, a certain incident took place which shook the Church; that was the incident of Ananias and Sapphira. Here we have Peter, by the authority of the Holy Spirit and His guidance confronting Ananias and Sapphira:

— "O, Ananias, you are lying to the Holy Spirit." So, he fell down and died.

— "O, Sapphira, How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried your husband are at the door, and shall carry you out." And she died and was buried beside her husband. And great fear came upon all the Church. Acts 5: 1-11.

What is this authority?

It was clear that a certain authority from God had been granted to those whom Christ had appointed to be responsible for the pastoral care of His Church and to spread His name everywhere and at all times. It is also clear that He had supported them with this authority by the Holy spirit for the sake of the glorious work which He had entrusted to them, that they might effect a renewal and a change in life, and establish a Church, a society for a spiritual kingdom which would thrive and prosper.

Clear statements

Jesus said to His disciples,

— "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18:18).

— "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained " (John 20: 22-23).

— "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world " (Matt. 28: 18-19).

St. Paul said,

— "According to the power which the Lord has given me to edification and not to destruction " (2 Cor. 13:10).

A question is raised

What is the meaning of the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy? Does it mean influential power and mastership? Or is it the power of love, pastoral care, and service?

The Authority of Love

Those to whom Jesus has given authority in the Church are not rulers or judges; but they are fathers, shepherds and ministers.

Also Fatherhood

The essential value and foundation of the Church is the love existing between the father and his sons. The father teaches his children, takes care of them and brings them up in the school of love—the love of God and of others.

And Pastoral Care

In the Church, the pastor is expected to lay himself down for the sheep, that is to love them more than himself. The Shepherd of shepherds says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep " Jn. 10:11.

And the Holy Spirit grants the grace of love to his servants to watch over the souls of men which God has loved, that they may have mercy on the sinner, raise the fallen, and dress the wounds of the injured.

The Authority of Love within Church. Society is stronger than the power of law in human society.

Examples of Church Authority

Forgiveness: The penitent stands in awe before the priest feeling that he has authority from God to forgive him.

Chastisement: He accepts punishment if it is passed on him from his spiritual father.

Chastisement is a *fatherly love and authority:* "for what son is he whom the father does not chastise." (Look up Heb. 12: 6-7).

The Sacraments: Each of the Holy Sacraments is fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit, but by means of the Church administering authority which freely grants the gifts of that sacrament and its blessings to the believer. It is an authority of *giving and love.* "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

Organizing: Every guidance, and every teaching of the Church; and every saying of the Fathers of the Church is considered divine by believer, for he trusts that the Church teaches by the authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit. And that the Spirit of God always guides to what is true and right. It is an authority *which leads the Church to the path of divine light and truth:* Note how the disciples had authority by the Holy Spirit in planning and organizing the affairs of the Church (Acts 13:2 and Acts 15:28).

Excommunication: In order to preserve the faith and moral purity of the Church from the corruptors who innovated false teachings and from those lived in immorality, it was necessary for the Fathers of the Church to exercise the authority of excommunicating and sorting out. This helped them to cut off those destructive elements from the body of the Church. Apostle Paul says, "But there are some who trouble you, and want

to prevent the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:7,8). Also see Tit. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 5:5. Though the Church has suffered a great deal from resorting to the weapon of excommunication; yet *it is an authority necessary to preserve the Orthodox Creed wholesome from the perversions of heretics and innovators. It is also necessary to preserve the holiness of the Church of God.*

The Orthodox and other views on Church authority

In the Roman Catholic Church the structure of the Feudal system prevails. The clergy have the authority which they exercise upon the laity. The clerical class is a hierarchical system with the Pope at the head, who is held to be infallible in teaching and in the exercise of his authority. The Pope claims to be the successor of Peter who in the Roman Catholic teaching had authority over the other apostles.

Protestantism: holds a contradictory view arguing that God himself has endowed every believer equally, with authority. They interpret the passage saying, "He has made you kings and priests for God His Father," to mean that God has equally distributed authority to all the believers. Thus, they give no importance in their system for a certain class devoted entirely to minister at the pulpit or the altar, i.e. the clergy.

Orthodoxy: on the other hand, considers authority as a fellowship. True that every believer is a member of the body, and that the clergy are entrusted with a special power to celebrate the sacraments, fight against innovators and chastize sinners, yet this divine authority is exercised in the spirit of love, truth, and submission to the Spirit acting within the group of

believers and fellowship of brethren. It is through the oneness of the spirit, truth and fellowship that the Church derives its authority.

Questions, Activities and Discussions

1. Cite situations from the Apostolic Age which show the characteristics of Church authority.

Problem for discussion

2. Some people believe that the Church has no longer a strong influence on the people, and many do not obey its teachings.

3. Discuss the difference between the Orthodox view and the views of the other Churches on the question of Church authority.

4. "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be in heaven." Explain, whose is this authority, what are its limits and uses?

Lesson 26 Word and Sacrament

Dialogue

First boy: I noticed, my friend, that you are very keen on going to Bible study classed and Sunday School, but that you are not so regular in attending mass.

Second boy: I have to admit, my friend, that I believe that the Bible study classes and Sunday School are more useful for spiritual growth.

First boy: But don't you feel the spiritual gifts we receive through the H. Eucharist in which we become partakers in His Body and Blood?

Second boy: And don't you realize that the study of the word of God nourishes our souls and guides our path?

First boy: Surely this is true, and it is the reason why the Church has organized the service so that it includes readings from the Holy Scriptures, study, interpretation and sermon as well as the partaking in the holy offering which fills us with grace.

Second boy: Do you therefore mean to say that there is a relation between the service of the word and that of the offering at the altar? This indeed is a matter which needs further explanation.

Historical Background

The Early Church: The Acts of the Apostles tells us that "They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). This teaches us that Christian worship has four elements:

1. The teaching of the Apostles—to study the word of God, to interpret and preach it.

2. Fellowship or agape in the community of the faithful. The agape meal was the symbol of their love and care for each other.

3. The breaking of bread—the Eucharist being their partaking in the Body and Blood of Christ.

4. Prayers—the sweet conversation which takes place between the Church and its Lord.

The integration of these four elements had produced a firm well-founded structure of the Community which had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all; as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people" (Acts 2: 42-46).

What happened next?

As centuries passed, the Church started neglecting these aspects which are considered one integrated unit. The Roman Catholic Church began to give less attention to the study, interpretation and teaching of the Word, giving preponderance to the sacraments. The clergy felt that they were superior to the people as princes of the Church who got their authority in administering the sacraments. The advent of Protestantism at the close of the middle ages in reaction to this abolished the mass, neglected the practice of the divine sacraments, and considered only preaching, teaching and study of the Word as the main concern of the Church.

We notice how, generally speaking, love meals (agape) diminished in the Church, a practice known to the apostles and what remains of it in some Churches are only traces.

In the Eucharist the believers are to participate in the flesh and blood of Christ in spirit. But now, many have come to look upon it as a ceremony just to be attended. This means

that they do not realize the meaning of the heavenly meal or of what takes place and do not have the spiritual experience of the fellowship of the believer in the body of Christ.

The close relationship between the teaching of the word and the offering of the divine sacrament.

— While administering the rites of any sacrament, we have at once an interpretation and an explanation with clear exemplifications of the Word. For example, notice in the words of the mass, the degree to which the concepts of salvation are clarified confirming these concepts in spiritual depth, emphasizing them to the believer, who appreciates them with his spirit and his own will through absorption in prayers and in the offering and the union with Christ.

— Notice during the sacraments of Baptism and anointing, the readings about the second birth and the new life and instructions to god-parents and parents, then the denunciation of the devil and the acceptance of faith, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. The child wears white garment symbolizing that he enters pure into the Kingdom of God. The child is taken in procession around the Church with gladness symbolic of the procession of those who have been saved.

— Notice in the sacrament of the unction of the sick, the blessing of healing is connected with a sincere repentance and confession of sin as the condition for healing, and then taking communion and praying with faith. The sick person calls to the Church and the priests perform the sacrament and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord "for the prayer of a believer heals the sick and the Lord restores him." This sense is emphasized and confirmed by the Church through the passages read during the performance of the rites of the sacrament.

— Notice in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony how the kingdom of the Christian home is founded and both the bride and groom are bound in marriage in holiness and glory receiving from the Church the instructions for founding a happy marriage. Through the sacrament, the union is accomplished between the two, and that which God has united, man cannot put asunder.

If ever you meet any instance where there is a gap between the administration of the sacrament and the holiness and spirituality of the Word, then you should know that there must be some defect in its application which needs to be corrected.

The Ministry ofthe Word

Man today believes in science, reason and development. He has a new method of thinking. We, therefore, need a new method of preaching and of theological interpretation of the Word of God, a new profound approach which goes beyond the apparent meaning of the text. Similarly, the Church should undertake the task of revising the old books in order to fit our contemporary situation.

The Breaking of Bread

Partaking of the divine sacraments and Church rites, is of great significance for the believers to have a spiritual sense of the wonderful and vivid effect of their actions, thus to grow in grace. Particularly fellowship in taking communion unites together the Body of Christ.

"Grant, O Lord, that we may all be worthy to *partake* of Thine Sacraments of this as a *purification* for ourselves, our

bodies and spirits. that we may become *one body* and *one spirit*, and be granted a share with Thine holy Saints."

(Quoted from the Holy Liturgy).

Fellowship in Love Meal

This comprises not only agape but all social activities which bind the group together spiritually.

Examples: The care for the orphan and widow; the poor and the jobless, love-meals, trips, parties, Church clubs.

We should not draw hard and fast distinction between social and spiritual work in the Church, but on the other hand should bear in mind that as we open our hearts, the spirit of God also works in many fields and it is through it that the Church expresses itself in its numerous activities.

Activities

— Fixing day for the whole family to have communion together or for the whole Sunday School class.

— Performing the love meal by the class for the poor.

— Writing short letters to be published and distributed among parents of newly baptized children or among those confessing or taking Communion, in order that the sacraments be more effective for their lives.

Lesson 27 Priesthood

Priesthood in the West: Distortions and controversies

We live in a world where science is making great strides of progress. This interest in science and its persuit started in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. New discoveries and inventions were made. Old theories about the physical world were discarded and new ones were put forward. This made it inevitable to have a confrontation with the Church. In the western Church this gave birth to a conflict and inaugurated a schism. The Church and the hierarchy uncompromising held fast to the age old theories and conventional practices.

Galileo Event: Galileo, the scientist invented his telescope through which he observed the planets. He came to the conclusion that the earth was rotating around the sun and not the other way, as was held until that time. This brought him in conflict with the Church authorities. He was accused of heresy and was to be burned at stake. At this trial he played a trick and expressed his repentance. He affirmed that the sun rotates round the earth. But as soon as he turned his back he said, "but it rotates," meaning the earth.

There were other instances too where the scientists came in conflict with the Church authorities. The clergy who claimed to be the custodians of faith and wisdom were often unscrupulous and blind conservatives.

It is a pity that during the Middle Ages many abuses and corruptions in faith and practice crept into the Church. The infallibility of the Pope, the idea of Purgatory, Sale of Indulgence, Treasury of Merits, Compulsory Celibacy of the priests were some among them.

The great progress in the field of science and the new awakening of the study of the Bible led many people to doubt and even question the corrupt doctrines of the Church. The result was Reformation.

The Protestant Movement. It was started as a protest to the many abuses of the Church. The reformists encouraged the spread and study of the Bible. New translations were made. Everything was put to the test of the Biblical teaching.

But the Roman hierarchy opposed it and forbade reading of the Bible fearing the danger of private interpretation. The gulf between the two became wide. The Roman Church used the weapon of excommunication and anathematizing. The Reformists became all the more vigorous and attacked the Roman doctrines. They rejected the Infallibility of the Pope and other such accretions. But in their enthusiasm to purify the Church, they went to the other extreme and landed in error. Their main target of attack was Papacy and Priesthood. They gave great importance to the idea of priesthood of all believers. However this resulted in discrediting the honour and authority of ordained ministers.

Priesthood in the Eastern Churches.

While this struggle was taking place in Europe, the East remained uninvolved. The Eastern Churches upheld that the Church is a priestly nation and every member shared in the

priestly honour and functions of the Church. The clergy never made preposterous claims. The laymen were not looked upon as second class citizens. The priest in all modesty and with one accord with congregation kneels down asking for pardon and tolerance from the people before he starts the service. In his prayers he asks God's pardon of his sins so that his own iniquity may not deprive the congregation of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The clergy in the East always stood with the people sharing their lot in the changing political and economic conditions. There was no attempt on the part of the Church to interfere with the political currents. It faithfully followed the principle, "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's."

The priest however plays a prominent role in the life of the Church as a whole. He is the leader and the mouthpiece of the Church. He has a distinctive part in the administration of Sacraments. He is entitled by a divine authority to tend the flock he is appointed for (1 Tim. Ch. 3-6; II Tim. Ch. 2). He takes his place at the Altar when the whole Church brings its offering before God. He makes the presence of the "Great High Priest" (Christ) real among His people.

It is true that the East has kept free from many of the corruptions of priesthood that were prominent in the Western christendom. But the East also needs some change in the role of priesthood. Some suggestions are hinted at:

(a) In some of the Churches the role of the Deacon has has become nominal. His place in the administration of the Church in general and also at the celebration of the Eucharist must be duly emphasised.

(b) The minstry of the priest should go beyond the administration of the rites of worship to the care of the flock. This should include social and economic aspects of peoples' life.

(c) Greater attention must be paid to the teaching ministry of the priest.

(d) There should be greater co-ordination between the priest and the people in the day-to-day affairs of the Church. The priest should become instruments of unity and promulgate the well-being of all.

St. Peter's words would clearly summarize the responsibilities of the priests and also their final reward; "I exhort the orders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as partaker of the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples of the flock." 1 Pet. 5: 1-4.

Questions and Activities

1. How was the clergy involved in the controversies of the W. Church during the middle ages? What were its results?
2. What is the approach of the East regarding priesthood?
3. What type of changes do we require in the present day priesthood?
4. Debate on: "The involvement of the priest in politics is necessary."
5. Read 1 Tim. Ch. 3-6; and Titus Ch. 1: What are the requirements for a pastor, according to St. Paul?
6. Write a small essay on:
   "What I would do in my parish, if I were a priest?".

Lesson 28 Icons

One of the characteristic features of Eastern tradition is the extensive use of icons. Icons have a significant role in the Eastern liturgical life. It is not simply a work of art similar in kind to other works of art. It is something more and something different. The icon derives its form from spiritual vision, spiritual understanding and deep spiritual content. The painters were usually monks, and there was a whole discipline of fasting and prayer required for painting an icon.

The place of Icons

When you look at an icon, try to think of the person it presents, trying to identify your own feelings with his. Then only will you be able, at one glance, to comprehend the meaning of his life, and then you will renew your life with a new light which has illuminated the world in the past and does so still by grace. In fact, these icons are none other than their life stories extending into our age to bear witness of struggle and the crown of glory they received.

Your revernce of the picture is in fact due to your reverence of the person, and even further, it is reverence for Him who sent him into the world and sanctified him.

The icons see in Churches have undergone a certain ritual called "the prayer of dedication" during the holy liturgy. The

icon was consecrated; and anointed by the holy oil (Marouny) and thus the icon acquires the quality of the most holy object in the Church, and should therefore be revered and incense burnt before it. We should therefore not wonder at people who approach the icon with great reverence, touching it with the tips of their fingers—because they are touching the consecrated icon in order to receive the blessing and intercession of the Saint.

A Historical Glimpse

Since the dawn of Christianity, icons have played an important role in the Church. We know from history that St. Luke made a picture of the Virgin Mary as we are told by Theodorus, the historian: "Empress Frederika sent to Bulgaria the picture of the Virgin Mary which had been painted by St. Luke."

In the second century, symbolic icons appeared—icons representing Christ as a lamb bearing the cross, or as a shepherd with a sheep in his arms, or a vine or fish (the Greek name for fish (Ikh"th'us) is composed of four letters which begin the four titles of Christ; IESUS. CHRISTOS, Theos, Vios, SOTHER meaning Jesus Christ Son of God and Saviour. Also icons represent the Holy Ghost as a dove.

The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed the appearance of realistic icons representing incidents of the gospels and disciples. Thus icons were a means to spread religious knowledge in an artistic manner.

Icons were also an expression of deep religious feeling. St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us about an icon, "I have beheld in his

icon the sufferings of Christ, and could not turn my eyes from it without weeping." Eventually, icons representing saints and patriarchs started to find their way to Churches side by side with icons of Christ and the disciples.

In the seventh century, miracles occured associated with icons. Oil dripped from certain icons had a miraculous effect in healing sickness. An icon of Christ had drops of blood at the spot where a Jew struck it. There was also the famous icon of "The Savious" in Constantinople which was associated with many miracles.

Christians therefore started showing great awe for icons to the extent of their worship. As a result, certain bishops decided to remove the icons and some ordered the breaking of them; (such as bishop of Mareellia called Cerenos). Gregory the Great,however, rebuked such actions and asserted that "The extreme reverence for the icon to the degree of worship is one thing, and to learn by means of the icon what one should respect and worship is another thing Thus if you find someone painting an icon, do not prevent him, but if you meet somebody worshipping the icon, then you should by all means stop him. The existence of the icon in the Church is of value to the illiterates who can learn through it what they miss in books."

Yet, Emperor Leo, at the begginning of the eighth century, decreed that all icons should be removed from Churches, and all paintings should be wiped out, because he considered their reverence to be a form of idol worship. The icons were to be broken on the head of the person in whose house they were found. After the death of the Empreror, representatives of patriarchs from all the world ordered to stop this iconoclastic movement, and to restore the icons to Churches and homes, so that believers could kneel before tham an kiss them; but they were

not for religious worship. Incense was allowed to be burnt before the icons, and candles lit.

While the Coptic Orthodox Church has remained throughout the centuries adhering to icons only, the Roman Catholic Churches have exaggerated in their adherence to statues, worshipping and making vows to them. Thus Protestants in the sixteenth century revolted against any form of reverence for pictures of saints considering such a picture as violating the second commandment; "Thou shall not make unto thyself a graven image..." (Ex. 2:4).

Questions and discussion

Is not the reverence of icons a violation of the second commandment?

The commandment was meant to be against the worship of icons and statues as is clear from the whole passage, "Do not kneel before it or worship it." This is further confirmed by God's commandment to Moses to make the images of two angels on the ark of the covenant. The Church, on the other hand, does not worship the icons; but places them in order to remind the people of the people they represent. Martin Luther himself said, "It is permitted for all Christians to keep pictures of saints because these are like the alphabet helping us to compose words, or bring closer to our minds and personify to us those whom the paintings represent."

How can we kneel before a picture which is nothing more than colours and lines?

Worship is one thing and reverence is another. God alone is to be worshipped, and the saints are highly revered and es-

teemed because of the Holy Spirit they possessed. We do not worship the material picture but we worship the Lord, represented by it, who took a human form to save us. In the older times, we only knew about God, the Unseen, but now that He has taken human form, we can make a picture of him.

Is it not sinful that we should represent the wounds of Christ publicly because we are thus representing God?

This is an argument from the devil, trying to make us hide from the eyes of all men the reality of Christ's suffering and His crucifixion. It would, in fact, be sinful to have tried to make a picture of the Unseen God, but to make a picture of God after taking human only helps satisfy our human eagerness to see how He looked, and this is fulfilled by the icon.

The priest, in the Old Testament used to kneel and burn incense before the Ark of the Covenant, because it is understood that the worship was for God Almighty and not for the wood of which the Ark was made.

Lesson 29 The Virgin Mary

The Virgin in Old Testament Symbols:

1. The Ark ofthe Covenant containing the word of God (the two tablets) the manna (the heavenly manna), (Ex. 25).
2. The burning bush which when the Lord appeared in it continued burning but was not consumed (Ex. 3) is like the Virgin.
3. Jacob's ladder set on earth with its top reaching heaven and the Lord standing above it (Gen. 28). The Virgin bore the Saviour in her womb and thus reconciled heaven and earth in the Beloved Son.
4. The pot of manna: it is clear that the manna is a symbol for Christ while the pot is the golden pot holding it (Ex. 16).
5. Aaron's censer, which held the burning incense in its womb while the sweet smell ascended alluding to the sweet offering on the cross (Num. 16: 46-48).
6. Aaron's sprouting before the tent of the testimony is a symbol of Mary who gave birth to Christ of the Holy Spirit while being Virgin (Num. 17).
7. The closed gate seen by Ezekiel, but through which the Lord entered while it remained shut, and which shall remain shut and no man shall enter by it (Ezech: 44).

'The Virgin Queen'—'The Second Eve'

Who was meant by David's prophecy in Ps. 45

"Your divine throne endures forever...the king will desire your beauty since he is your Lord..." Thus all Christians have considered her their ideal in the kingdom of heaven. She is a queen in the kingdom, therefore an icon of the Virgin is placed on the right of the altar in Church as she sits on the right hand of Glory.

The Church considers Mary as the Second Eve, for while Eve was the mother of men in the flesh, the Virgin Mary is the Second Eve because she is the mother of all of us being the Mother of the Saviour who gave us all new life. The first Eve brought the fall of Adam, but the Second Eve brought Salvation to all the sons of Adam.

Reverence for the Virgin throughout the Ages

She is the one who was worthily chosen to be the Mother of the Lord.

On hearing of this great honour, bestowed upon her, she said in prophecy, "From now on, all generations will call me blessed."

This prophecy was fulfilled for she became the Mother of the Light. She bore our Saviour.

The Lord on the cross entrusted her care to John His Beloved Disciple telling him, "Here is your mother" becoming the Mother of all believers who are represented by John in one holy family in the Kingdom of God.

Then at her death, the Lord honoured her body which was assumed into the Eternal Realms.

Yet, she remained for generations in the hearts of believers, occupying the first place among saints, excelling all the creation. It is true that at certain times there were some who went in their praise of the Virgin to the extreme of worship (such as in the Roman Catholic Church) which provoked the attack of Protestants who tend to undermine this praise since their appearance in the sixteenth century.

Mary the Mother of God

The Church continued to call Mary by the name "The Mother of God" (Theotokos) even when Nestorius brought forward his heretical teaching claiming that "The Creator canot be born of a woman, and therefore Mary as a woman only bore a human being—she is only the Mother of Jesus." These arguments were refuted by St. Cyril the Great who proved that the one born of the Virgin is the incarnate God, or the Unity of the Human and the Divine Natures. The Council of Ephesus was held to lay the canons of the faith which says, "We praise thee, O Mother of the Light... and we glorify thee O Mother of God." Refer to the following passages: Lk. 1:35. Lk. 1:43. Gal. 4:4.

Mary's Continual Virginity

Isaiah prophecied that a Virgin would conceive and bear a child. Thus Christ was born of a Virgin who was saintly and who preserved her virginity all her life; as Ezekiel said (Ezek: 44:2): "This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it for the Lord has entered by it." This

as explained later by Augustine meant that, "This closed gate in the house of the Lord is none other than the undefiled Mary."

The Protestants argue against Mary's continual virginity drawing on the text that she knew no man *until* she brought forth her first child. St. Irenaeus, when he was explaining this text to Alpedios made this apology: "Would the statement that Alpedios did not repent until his death, mean that he repented after death?"

Another argument is that some reference had been made to Christ's brethren in Matt. 13:55 and John 2:12.

Jacob and Joses were only cousins of Jesus.

It was a usual practice to call one's cousins one's brethren in Jesus' times. Jacob and Joses were the sons of Mary the wife of Cleophas. She was the sister of Virgin Mary and was also called 'Mary' because she was the one left to her parents after they had offered Mary the Virgin to the Temple.

In brief, we have neither from the Bible nor from Church History nor tradition any evidence to support this erroneous view about the Virgin that she had children other than Jesus.

Questions

1. Explain how the following words of Mary were fulfilled:

   "All generations will call me blessed." Show her status among saints.

2. What did Nestorius say about the Virgin? and how would you refute his arguments?

3. Certain verses refer to Christ's brothers, how do you explain this?

4. How were the following objects symbolic of the Virgin Mary:

   The burning bush, the Ark of the Covenant, Aaron's rod? What is Mary's symbolic role to makind? to the Church?

UNIT 8 SING UNTO THE LORD

Lesson 30 Have Mercy on Me, O Lord (Ps. 51)

This is a Psalm which has touched the heart of many a soul. It has a soothing effect upon the penitent and opens the way to the presence of God. Almost every office or liturgy begins with this Psalm because it helps the worshippers to approach God in true penitence and utter humility.

The name of this psalm calls to our memory a sad story:

David fell in sin, he who had brought about the fall of mighty men. He desired Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite. In order to cover his sin, David resorted to a terrible plot to murder Uriah in battle. When Uriah was killed, David took Bathsheba. This act displeased the Lord.

What a terrible thing that a man who had reached the most lofty height should fall to such low levels! David was found to be weak; he yielded to the same temptation which overthrew so many men causing thier fall. The victims of this temptation

are among the strong. Nathan the Prophet came to convince David of his sin through a parable. Thereupon David wept with remorse and confessed saying, "I sinned before the Lord." And he poured his spirit before God in contrition and prayed asking for forgiveness, "Have mercy on me, O Lord." Thus it has come to be the greatest psalm on repentance embracing both the needs of the repenting soul and its reactions. (Read 2 Sam. Ch. 11,12).

The repenting person confesses his sins: (Verses 3-5)

He was brought to an acute awareness of his guilt when Nathan said to him, "You are the man...." He confesses that he sinned before God and committed this evil in His sight.

He confesses the evil which is at the root of his fallen nature.

Asks for forgiveness: (Verses 1,2, 7 and 9)

He seeks refuge in God's great mercy in humility which reminds us of the publican's prayer, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Even though David received forgiveness from Nathan, he is still asking forgiveness from God.

The Lord has forgiven, but he has not yet forgiven himself.

He wishes his sin would be wiped off, and his heart purified, cleansed with water and blood and so he prays: "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." In old times hyssop was dipped in the blood of the offering and sprinkled on those whoever wished to be cleansed from leprosy.

(Lev. 14:4). To the Christian this is a symbol of cleansing by the blood of Christ, from the leprosy of sin. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

He seeks to rest his conscience: (Verses 8 and 12)

The conscience at last finds rest and the soul loses its anxiety and frustration when God in his mercy, has forgiven his sins. His repentance was deep and sincere. It up-rooted his sin and filled his heart with joy and happiness.

He regains the joy of salvation—joy in the Lord and in the hope of a happy eternity and the strong hand of God supports him from falling again in sin.

He needs the work of grace: (Verses 10,11 and 14)

By an active grace—his inward nature changes, which had been corrupted by sin. When he is supported by grace, nothing can separate him from God.

This experience can be recalled in the words of Paul who says with confidence, "Who can separate me from the love of Christ....?"

David remembers very well what happened to Saul when the Spirit of the Lord departed from him; therefore, David was more deeply conceived with a possible loss of the grace of God, than the loss of any worldly possessions. He prays, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Thus the Lord is glorified in His forgiving mercy, and His supporting grace.

He seeks freedom: (Verse 15)

David finds a wonderful freedom; a freedom in which the repentant soul feels unbounded the heart opens up to love, and flows in such wonderful praise. The soul tells about the experiences of the Spirit. An imprisoned spirit bound by the chains of sin, enslaved by the devil, is such a contrast to a free spirit, free as a bird having escaped the hunter's snare.

The gift offered by God: (Verses 13, 16, 17 and 19)

David gives a promise and a sincere desire to guide sinners and show them the way of the Lord because He himself had passed along the bitter experience of sin. He will do his best for the good of his fellowmen, and the glory of God.

His gift will not be merely a burnt-offering or anything of its nature, because such offerings do not please the Lord. (See Ps. 50). His gift will be his own humble contrite spirit—the spirit of humility and obedience.

The Gift of Redemption

As for us sinners, the Lord Jesus has offered His body as an offering for us. It pleased the Lord to bear our sin upon himself and to become our sin-offering, so that each repenting soul in humility can unite with the Lord's offering and through it gain forgiveness and repentance.

Questions

— Why does the repenting person need the work of grace in his life? What is its effect?

— What did David mean when he said, "Restore me to the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit?"

— State a verse of this psalm where the person prays for perfect forgiveness.

— "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." What does this signify?

— Choose a verse you like in the Psalms, and explain its impression on you.

Exercise

Every one whose conscience is heavy with sin, should repeat this prayer once, or a number of times; believing firmly that the Lord Jesus is the intercessor of sinners. He should confess his sins to the priest, confirm his covenant with the Lord by partaking of His Holy Body and Blood.

Text for Memorization

Psalm 51.

Lesson 31 Praise the Lord (Ps. 113)

This is one of the psalms of praise sung usually in ancient times on important feasts, (Ps. 113-118) to express joy at religious ceremonies.

"Halleluya" i.e. "Praise the Lord" is at the opening and clossing of the psalm. It is believed that in the upper room our Lord and the disciples sang these psalms of praise.

We remember that Mary's heart was overflowing with joy after receiving the goodnews that our Saviour would be born through her. Her heart was filled with joy. The famous hymn of praise she sang on that occasion was taken out of this psalm (Luke 1:46).

Similarly, the hymn of the angels on the eve of the Nativity by which they announced the glad tiding to all the people was a summary of this psalm.

His glory is above the heavens, who looks far down to earth who gives the barren a child. Glory to God on the Highest and on earth peace.

Verses 1-3: "Praise O Servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time and for evermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting!

Stimulates us to praise God

By giving us good and strong reasons to praise Him, Angels themselves who are His ministers praise Him better than we do.

Let all generations, all nations of the earth from east to west, praise Him, for they all know His goodness, wisdom and power.

Prayer of praise

In reciting this prayer, the person transcends himself and rises in worship to praise God and glorify Him.

This rite is of a special significance among other rites in the Orthodox Church (the daily praise, morning, evening and midnight praises). The believer spends long periods of time in giving praise without asking for anything for himself. Our love for God shows itself in praising Him, for this will be our ministry before His throne all through eternity.

John in the apocalypse tells us, "Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein saying to him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for-ever and ever!" (Rev. 5,13).

Our praise here on earth is related to the praise we will sing in heaven, for there cannot be among the heavenly host anybody who has not learnt to sing praises while on earth. "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and making melody to the Lord with your heart (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16).

Verses 4-6: "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens."

Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down upon the heavens and the earth?

Why do we praise Him?
We praise Him for His greatness and glory

Let us lift our eyes and behold His glory in the heavenly life and praise Him.

"Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales...All nations are as nothing before Him" (Is. 50:15).

His throne is above the skies and angels, and yet He watches all nations and people. He dwells on high and looks down on humble creatures (excerpt from liturgical prayers). He organizes everything. "He does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth;...none can blame Him."

He humbled Himself

He humbled Himself in order to show us His love in such a wonderful manner, to send His Son from on high to take the likeness of man to save and redeem humanity which was moving towards its distruction.

The Lord works in the smallest matter as much as in mighty works. Thus we know that the world is not ruled by the laws of nature, but by the hand of God, the Lord of nature.

Verses 7-9: He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with princes of His people. He gives the barren a home, making her the joyous mother of children! Praise the Lord.

Let us praise His work

At one moment the Lord according to His goodwill searches for man, lifts man out of his humble state such as when Gideon was crushing the mustard, Saul while he was looking for the asses, David as he was tending the sheep and the disciples as they were catching fish.

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27).

Apply this on Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth.

Questions

1. Who did refer to this psalm in his prayers? On which occasions was it recited?

2. What is the significance of praise in relation to other forms of prayer?

3. Explain how do we praise God in His might and His humility?

4. Compare this psalm with the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest...."

Exercise

Experience the sense of this psalm by repeating it in your morning and evening prayers.

Activities

People among you with musical instruments should try to compose a tune for this psalm to be sung on coming occasions.

Memorize

Psalm 113.

Lesson 32 "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me"

(Ps. 139:1)

It is believed by some scholars that this is the most wonderful psalm ever written by David. It is a contemplation in the spirit of worship and prayer of an important theological axiom, namely; "God's perfect knowledge of all things."

God's perfect knowledge of man:

"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me! Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou discernest my thoughts from afar.
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, And art acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou dost beset me behind and before and layest thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it."

(Ps. 139:1-6)

God, with whom we deal, has perfect knowledge of all our feelings and actions both the inward and the outward. We see

David admitting this fact with honesty and reverence before God and applying it personally to his own life.

— "Thou hast searched me and known me.." David, as we know, was King—and the minds of kings are not searched by men, so man cannot have access to their ideas. Solomon says, "The mind of kings is unsearchable" (Pro. 25:3). But it is searched by the Lord who is the God and Creator of Kings.

— Thou has known me wherever I am and whatever I do. Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up, thou discernest my thoughts even before I think..... and after those thoughts have been wiped off my failing memory. Thou knowest what is in my heart and the ideas I take with me to bed.

— Thou art around me from all sides, for wherever I am, I am always under God's searching eye and powerful arm for all things are uncovered and revealed to Him.

— David, then, discusses two aspects of this truth.

First: God's omnipresence is the cause of His omniscience:

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in sheol, thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I sav. "Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light with thee".

(Ps. 139: 7-12)

The Lord says, "Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24). For He fills the universe and it is all under His control.

— Whatever direction I take, I find God before me; in heaven, in the abyss, in a remote corner away from the world; or if I take the wings of the morning and fly with the speed of the morning rays still I find God's hand which leads me for I cannot go far enough from the stretch of Thy hand.

— I cannot hide from Thee, either. I thought to myself that perhaps darkness would cover me and its dark veils conceal me but behold the night is bright as the day; unless all the masks of deceit to which I resort to hide the reality of man and his actions from the searching eye of God which penetrates all darkness.

— Our attempt to escape is due to our guilt feeling.
.....escape to the depth—*but in vain for God fills the universe.*
.....then escape to dark places—*but in vain for God's light overcomes darkness.*

Second: Man is the work of God's hands—and therefore God has a perfect knowledge.

"For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb."

"I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful."

" Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. Thy

eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them" (Ps. 139: 13-16).

The artificer knows all the intricacies of his creation, and thus also *God who is our creator knows all our secrets.*

— *Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.* The members of my body are written down in thy holy record, and Thy wisdom has wrought wonders! The Everlasting Wisdom has worked most perfectly and wonderfully to shape every single part producing the most perfect harmony and co-ordination among the parts of the whole.

Thou hast formed me to be a living, holy and wonderful temple in accordance with a holy archetype in Thine own supreme knowledge.

— Further he deduces certain conclusions:

1. **Admiration and gratitude to God for His goodness:**
   "How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God; How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand, when I awake, I am still with thee" (Ps. 139: 16-18).

I cannot count the blessings of God which are renewed with the break of every new day, when I awake I am still with Thee-watched by Thy vigilant eye, kept in Thy care.

2. Destruction is the inescapable end of sinners:

"O that Thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God, and that men of blood would depart from me, men who maliciously defy Thee, who lift themselves up against Thee for evil! Do I hate them that hate Thee, O Lord? And do I loathe them that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies" (Ps. 139: 19-22).

Depart from me you evil doers...I will not mix with them. Thou knowest, O Lord, my seal...I loathe them because I cannot bear their flouting of Thy holy name...Thou knowest my heart, O Lord, that I hate them an loathe the sight of them in their destruction. I utterly hate them and hate their works, I will not set before my eyes anything that is base (Ps. 101:3).

3. An honest pursuit of perfection:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139: 23-24).

I hope, O Lord, that there will be no more evil tendency in me, but if such a tendency is still to be found, help me to discover it and to uproot it for I will not have any evil in me, and guide me, O Lord, to find the everlasting way.

Questions and discussion:

1. Departing from evil is itself a virtue as expressed by David in his Psalm, saying, "I hate them with perfect heart." What

are the limits within which it would be possible to apply this virtue according to Christian teaching and particularly in friendship and comradeship?

1. It is our duty to search ourselves and to discover its secrets. "See if there be any wicked way in me"; what is the means to achieve this?

Training:

Search your heart every day and submit it daily to the Lord.